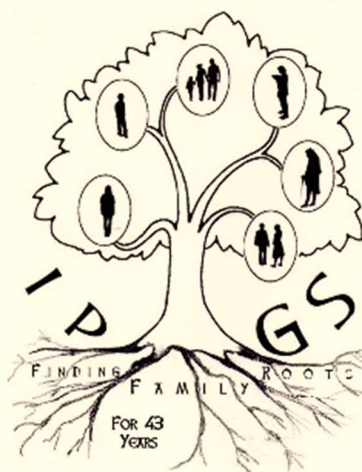




Imperial Polk Genealogical Society

Spring 2026 Newsletter

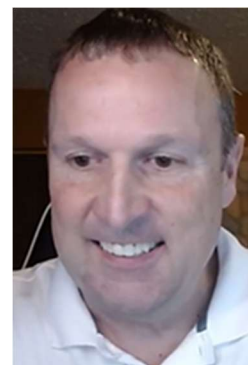


All programs are hybrid and open to the public. See March 14 forum p. 2

April 11: I have a Civil War ancestor. Now what?

Civil War soldiers often left a rich genealogical paper trail. Many of these records are at the National Archives in Washington D.C. Learn what records are available for your ancestors only at the National Archives, what records are online, and how to access all of them. These may unlock some of the family stories that have been forgotten over time, as well as break down a brick wall or two!

Brian Rhinehart is a professional genealogist, a graduate of Boston University's Certificate of Genealogy Research and a regular researcher for the television show Finding Your Roots. He specializes in research and record retrieval for Civil War and War of 1812 soldiers. Check him out at <https://civilwarrecords.com/>.



*Brian Rhinehart of
Civil War Records*

June 13: Reconstructing family info from almost nothing

This case study demonstrates techniques and sources that enabled reconstruction of six generations of a family, although the search began with only the slimmest of information. See and learn from a detailed demonstration of these skills and techniques.

Janice Sellers is president of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon, specializes in several aspects of research, and has a lively, interactive web site at <http://www.ancestraldiscoveries.com/>.



*Janice Sellers of
Ancestral Discoveries*

Meetings are each 2nd Saturday in the Lakeland History & Culture Center of the Lakeland Public Library. We follow programs with Q&A and spirited discussion. Request Zoom link at news@ipgs.org.

President's Message



Our society began 2026 on a positive note. Both our Ancestry Forum and our regular program and business meetings had strong attendance, and we are hopeful that participation will continue to improve.

We still need your support as members to aid struggling new genealogists, assistance to monitor the website and Facebook, to make suggestions for topics for discussions or programs, and to share your difficult but successful findings as well as your unique stories from your family tree. We join to learn and share. Let's keep going.

Lynn Hice, President

Life members set the pace for sponsorships

They met the challenge! Several IPGS **life members** have stepped up to sponsor upcoming programs for 2026 in response to the board bringing in professional speakers.



IPGS has a frugal budget. The board has cut costs where possible and taken advantage of special services offered to nonprofits. The budget still must bear legal fees for our IRS status, online meetings, web page improvements and general business expenses.

These contributors hope to help IPGS avoid dipping into our savings account this year to cover the speakers. Maybe you would like to help meet the challenge as well!

GREAT BIG THANK YOU's to **Suzy Eickhoff**, **Melvin Sellers** and **Marcia Ford** for kicking off our fund drive. They are hoping to be pace setters for continued sponsorships.

"I was glad to do it," said Mel. "Thank you for the opportunity to assist."

Don't miss our next Ancestry Forum

Did you pick up ideas from RootsTech? Do you want to hear what was gleaned by your genealogy colleagues? Or is there some puzzle you need help to solve?

Discussion prompts for the March 14 Ancestry Forum are:

- Takeaways from RootsTech2026. What sessions did we watch, and what did we learn to share with the group?
- Shared discoveries or brick walls you need help with.
- Ideas for organizing our research.

These open-discussion group chats will be the afternoons of March 14, and May 9.

All up-to-date IPGS members will receive an email link to the Zoom version. Others may request a link from news@ipgs.org.

Those who prefer more social opportunity will meet at the Lakeland History and Culture Center at the Lakeland Public Library. Ancestry Forums are at our regular meeting times of 1 p.m. on the second Saturday of the month.



Preserving historical records for posterity

Archiving has resumed for the bounty of historical preservation files and community resources at the L.B. Brown Museum in Bartow. Lacking fulltime staff, organizer John Laurent and board member Gale Pinkston are announcing volunteer days as we go.



Patricia Smith Fields, onsite manager

IPGS members have the opportunity to train onsite to scan and catalogue additions to the archive. All preservation is being accomplished by volunteer time and contributions, supported by grants and donations.

If you would like to participate, notify news@ipgs.org, and we will let you know of upcoming dates. Did you know the L.B. Brown House is featured in the [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)?

The volunteer archivists are learning fun local history trivia and scanning great old photos. Also the good company invites enthusiasm for each opportunity to return.

Contributions from the community have been sorted for cataloguing. Laurent, president of the Florida Genealogical Society, has garnered support from that group, defined the format for saving electronic files, and devised a redundant backup system. The files will be accessible at the Polk County History Center when completed.



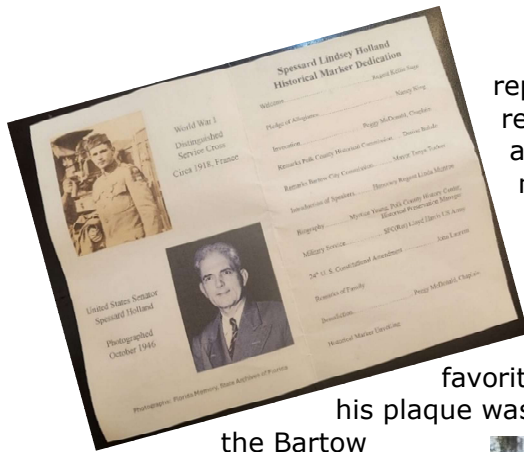
IPGS volunteers John Laurent and Gale Pinkston team up to scan and label individual files for photographs and documents at the L.B. Brown House in Bartow.



Did you renew?

If your membership expired at the end of 2025, it is time to renew for 2026. Help support quality programs. Renew online at ipgs.org or send a check to IPGS, PO Box 92154 Lakeland, FL 33804-2154. \$20 individual, \$25 family, \$150 lifetime for ages 65 and up.

Honoring a favorite son



IPGS was well represented at the recent unveiling of an historical marker honoring Spessard Holland, who was Florida governor 1941-1945. A

favorite son of Bartow, his plaque was sponsored by

the Bartow Daughters of the American Revolution.

Bartow's Veterans Park acknowledges local, fallen, military veterans by name. Holland is perhaps best known as the U.S. Senate's sponsor of outlawing poll taxes, a battle that took most of his 24 years in Congress, and as founder of the Lakeland-based law firm Holland & Knight.

The audience was most engaged hearing Lloyd Harris' story how Holland survived extreme gunfire as an observer on a WWI surveillance flight in the Army Air Service. He was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in a two-seater biplane. Behind enemy lines, he and his pilot "continued on their mission in spite of being harassed by anti-aircraft, securing information of great military value."



IPGS attendees, from left, are Shannon Graham, Melvin Sellers, Linda Munroe, John Laurent, Kellie Sage and Marcia Ford.

Another member published

Marcia Ford's profile of Thomas Jefferson Mitchell, Civil War veteran and little brother of her great-great-grandmother, was published by the nation's largest state genealogical society in the winter 2025 issue of the Ohio Genealogical Society Quarterly.

Ford is an Ohio native, one of several IPGS "buckeyes." In addition to IPGS and the Polk County Historical Society, she belongs to similar societies in Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Virginia.



Volunteer opportunities

Tell us your choice at news@ipgs.org. We have fun together!

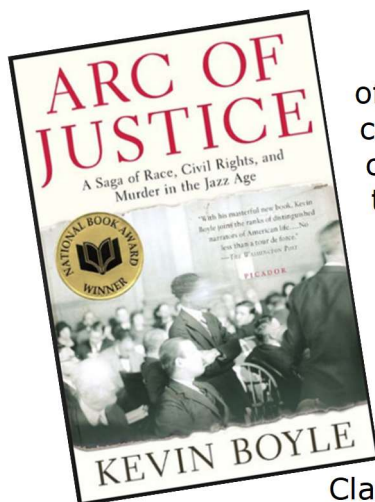
- Fundraiser
- Sunshine
- Newsletter
- IPGS Chronicles (journal)
- Membership/Hospitality
- Publicity/Outreach

- Program sponsor
- Speakers bureau
- Technology advising

We work with the following software: Wix, Zeffy, Google Docs, Microsoft 365

Cemetery tours well worth your time

If you get the chance, join a cemetery tour hosted by the Polk County History Center. The tour includes terrific local history. For example, several pioneer families are featured in a brochure for the Evergreen Cemetery tour in Bartow, including voters for the original city charter in 1882.



Jayne Jamison of the history center yields

captivating stories based on considerable research about their lives and relationships. She also hosts an eclectic and entertaining video featuring some of the offerings [here](#), recorded for the county commission's Polk County TV.



Headstones at Evergreen have varied inscriptions, some with inlaid portraits.

Perhaps the most famous was Bartow native Dr. Ossian Sweet, who studied in Vienna and Paris and practiced in Detroit. Caught in a racial conflict there, his defense in a murder trial, for which the NAACP hired famed attorney Clarence Darrow, set precedent for the right to defend one's home regardless of race. Describing the trial and important civil rights implications, historian Kevin Boyle's book *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*, won the 2004 national Book Award for Nonfiction and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History.

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