

Cedar Lake Historical Association Genealogy Presentation

September 22, 2013 – Diane Sprehe

FAMILY SOURCES

- Start with yourself and work backwards with as much as you know
- The more information you can gather with matching dates etc. the more confident you can feel about the facts being true
- Document your sources – the more official documents you have the more sources you have
- Talk to family members and write down what they say and who told you as a source
- Get information from family documents
 - Birth & baptism certificates (will show date, place of birth, parents and parents' place of birth)
 - Diaries, letters, misc. news clippings
 - Family Bible (write down all important dates, keep in mind that whoever wrote in the family bible may be writing from memory and may not be 100% accurate)
 - Photos (look for names, dates, places, again may not be 100% accurate) will sometimes show other family members and branches of the family; scan unidentified photos and email to out-of-state family members to see if they can identify – take old photos to family gatherings; reunions, funerals, weddings to see if people can identify
 - Family conversations/interviews
 - Obituaries, funeral cards, death certificates (keep in mind again that all of this information was given by a family member, may not always be 100% accurate)
 - Marriage certificates (marriage applications, available at courthouses, show quite a lot of information, such as birthdate, place of birth, occupation, parents' names and places of birth)
- Cemeteries
 - If members of your family are in one cemetery, write down all information for all relatives' tombstones; write down the name and place of cemetery and use as a source
- Local town and family histories at local libraries

REFERENCE SOURCES

- Libraries
 - Cedar Lake Public Library (Lake County)
 - Reference books about Cedar Lake behind circulation desk – have to ask to view; cannot be checked out
 - Free in-library computer access to **ancestry.com** and newspaper archives

- Crown Point Library (219-306-4593 reference desk phone number) – www.crownpointlibrary.org
 - Free in-library computer access to ancestry.com with CP library card only – which anyone can obtain by bringing in your own home library card (must be in good standing in your home library)
 - Without a CP library card you may obtain a 45 minute guest pass
 - Access to **Heritage Quest** (online) with CP library card either at library or from your home computer
 - Research and information tab
 - Databases & Research Tools
 - Heritage Quest Online; put in library barcode and CONNECT
 - Search census
 - Search books
 - Search PERSI archive
 - Search Revolutionary War
 - Search Freedman's Bank
 - Search U.S. Serial's Set
 - All of their genealogy books reside in the 929 Section; can be checked out with library card
 - Reference section of library also has Section 929 for genealogy, but the reference books CANNOT be checked out
 - Indiana Room – reference materials cannot be removed from room
 - Lake County Star newspaper microfilms 1857-present (some missing due to aged condition); obituary index
 - Old Crown Point HS yearbooks
 - History books of the area and the residents by Timothy Ball
 - Legacy books with indexes (CPHS book project)
 - Lake and Porter County cemetery indexes
 - 1935-1946 etc Crown Point marriage indexes
 - Some local phone directories
- Porter County Public Library Valparaiso Branch
 - www.pcpls.lib.in.us/genealogy.html
 - Genealogy Room – always staffed, very helpful, open the same hours as the library
 - Free access to ancestry.com and other websites from within the Genealogy Room
 - A lending library for familysearch.org (you can sign up for an account with familysearch.org and order microfilms to rent, pay for them online and have them sent to the Genealogy Room
 - \$7.50 to order a film for 90 days
 - \$18.75 to order permanently; housed in Genealogy Room
 - All U. S. Census records on microfilm from 1790 (year of first official U. S. Census) – 1940; later years mostly NW Indiana
 - City Directories

- All Gary Diocese Catholic records (1850-1991 scattered records)
- Website access to newspaper archives
- Lake County Public Library – Merrillville
 - www.lcplin.org
 - Click **LEARN**: click **GENEALOGY**, search Lake County marriage records – can view, download records
 - Also click **LEARN; USEFUL WEBSITES; GENEALOGY** to access many more websites and additional information
 - Free access to ancestry.com at all Lake County public library branches
 - Free access to Heritage Quest online at home with valid Lake County Public Library card (must be resident of Lake County Public library district) meaning Crown Point library patrons must log into Heritage Quest via Crown Point Library since that is their home library)
 - Indiana Room (2nd Floor)
 - Books, maps, atlases, NY Times & Chicago Tribune newspapers on microfilm, city directories, Lake and Porter County geography etc.
 - Genealogy Room (1st Floor)
 - Not staffed – most knowledgeable Marilyn & Sharon – best to go when they are working front desk
 - Microfilms & microfiche
 - Soundex microfilms
 - Once you know your family code, you can look up by family code other names that are similar and search by those names too; i.e. Juracek,, Jiracek, Giracek etc
 - Complete set of 1992 Family Search microfiche (should be same information found on ancestry.com) i.e. an entire state with each county and names information on one microfiche
 - Obituary Indexes (find a name, book will tell you what date and what newspaper obituary appeared)
 - Local newspapers on microfilm
 - Post-Tribune 1921-present
 - Hammond Times 1906-present
 - There are some other limited local newspapers; a list is adhered to file cabinet in microfilm room
 - Newspaper archives online at library only
 - Database of U.S. and a few other countries' newspapers fully searchable by keyword and date
 - Can be accessed at ANY Lake County Public Library branch
 - Copies of past and current **TWIGS** newsletters
 - Complete census for state of Indiana only

- Births and marriage indexes for mostly Lake County; approximately 1850-1920
- High school yearbooks – mostly Lake County
- Naturalization records
- WPA records (works projects administration – started by President Roosevelt to put unemployed people to work) one of the jobs was indexing vital records
- State history books
- ***Germans to America*** book series
- German parish records – if you know the area your ancestor lived in, you can find nearby church to obtain church records (usually either Lutheran or Catholic); church records on microfilm will give parents' names and where the parents are from also
- Civil War books detailing troop action
- Allen County Public Library – Fort Wayne, IN
 - www.genealogycenter.org
 - Video tours of their collections
 - Access to free genealogical databases
 - Overviews of the library
 - Have at least eight genealogical librarians on staff
 - Second only to Salt Lake City, UT in collections
 - Wifi provided for your device; also computer access within library using guest card
 - Library only access to online sites: Ancestry.com, Heritage Quest and NewEnglandAncestors.org
 - Lending library for family search.org
 - Over 350,000 books & 513,000 microfilms and microfiche in collections
 - Over 55,000 individual family histories in book form & 5000 genealogies on microfilm
 - Over 48,000 city directories
 - Passenger lists, military records, U. S. local records and special collections
 - Native American records
 - African American, Canadian, British Isles, Germany records
 - Over 10,000 periodicals
- Out of State or County Libraries – many have websites and many offer “ask a librarian”
 - Google “ask a librarian” and city/county state
 - You can online chat and/or email a librarian with a question or ask them to lookup a local obituary for you. This is sometimes free and sometimes a small charge such as postage for mailing.
- Northwest Indiana Genealogical Society - \$15/year if joining online
 - www.nwigs.org as a member have access to online information

- TWIGS newsletter accessible online to members
- Monthly meetings/learning seminars; genealogical speakers every third Saturday of every month excluding December; meeting locations vary

OUT OF STATE HELP

- Every state has their own Vital Records department
 - Births, deaths, marriages
 - Law varies from state to state on what years you can search for records
 - Most states have a genealogical vital record division and for a cost you can request a copy of these records

CENSUS INFORMATION

- U.S. Census taken every ten years beginning in 1790
- The 1890 U.S. Census records were destroyed in a fire; only a very small amount remains
- Every ten years a new census is released to the public 70 years later; i.e. the next census to be released will be the 1950 census to be released in 2020, the last one released was the 1940 census which was released in 2010
- Print out blank census record forms to be able to clearly read the headings – different years recorded different information – many websites sites offer the printing of blank forms

INTERNET WEBSITES

- Family Search.org – www.familysearch.org (sign up for free account if wishing to order microfilms for local viewing)
 - Headquarters Salt Lake City, Mormon site, original microfilms kept in vault inside of mountain
 - Thousands of records on microfilm; can be sent to local viewing locations such as Griffith Family Center (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) or Valparaiso branch of Porter County Public Library
 - Try Search, then Wiki to get acquainted with sources
 - Wiki section GREAT place to view many items – can search for “genealogy word lists” and can see most commonly used words in foreign language vital records as well as several translation websites
 - Try to search a specific area to see all microfilms recorded for that area
 - Click SEARCH
 - Click CATALOG
 - In “place” box, enter state, county, town or city (Indiana, Lake, Cedar Lake)
 - Click SEARCH
 - You will view a list of all microfilms available for the area requested

- Click on a microfilm you are interested in renting and you will be taken to the payment section as well as which lending library you would like it shipped to
- Ancestry.com – www.ancestry.com
 - Library version free at all libraries carrying a subscription
 - Annual subscription at a cost (suggestion could be a family could split the annual fee and share)
 - Tutorials available to help you under “Learning Center” tab
 - Census records viewed online can be printed or saved to your family tree which can be created within Ancestry.com
 - If you create a tree online – be advised to also have a copy in a family tree software version and/or keep hard copies of all of your information in case for some reason the information gets lost at the ancestry.com site
 - Blank forms can be printed from this website
 - Do not jump to using information from public family trees for your ancestors; not all information may be accurate, including parent names, birth etc. If you can verify information, or see very detailed and accurate proof of documentation it maybe be a good source to add to your own family tree at that time only
- Indiana Genealogical Society – www.indgensoc.org
 - Access to Lake County marriage records 1811 – 1959
- Castle Garden – www.castlegarden.org
 - First official immigration center in New York
 - Immigration records from 1820-1892 when Ellis Island opened
- Ellis Island – www.ellisland.org
 - Immigration records after 1891
 - Ellis Island is not the ONLY port of entry immigrants arrived in U.S.
 - Can then search for naturalization papers for ancestor and will be able to see parents’ names, physical description and possible photo
- Rootsweb – www.rootsweb.com
 - Many areas of information
 - Message Boards very good area to begin
 - Look under Message Boards towards bottom left and select **SURNAMES** (or go to main message board page and choose locality)
 - Enter a surname and click **GO** to see if a message board already exists
 - Read or post messages and can sign up to be emailed every time a new post gets entered
- Find a Grave – www.findagrave.com
- War of 1812 Pensions – <http://go.fold3.com/1812pensions>
- American History and Genealogy Project – www.ahgp.org
- Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System – www.itd.nps.gov/cwss
- Indiana Gen Web – www.ingenweb.org
- Naval History Information Center – www.hazegray.org
- Calumet Regional Archives – www.iun.edu/~cra

FORMS & FAMILY TREES

- Ancestors Charts and Records – www.byub.org
- Family Tree and Me – www.familytreeandme.com
- ObituariesHelp.org – www.obituarieshelp.org (family trees and blank census forms)
- Family Search – www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/
- Ancestry.com – www.ancestry.com/download/forms (download blank forms and census)
- Ancestry Printing – www.ancestryprinting.com (free downloads)
- Genealogy software programs such as Family Tree Maker (PC) and Reunion (Mac) have built-in capabilities of creating family trees and charts with your information
 - Additionally software programs such as these can create books for publishing
 - You can save your family tree created with software as a generic “GEDCOM” file that can be opened by all other family tree-making software to exchange with family members
- ***Unpuzzling Your Past Workbook – Essential Forms and Letters for All Genealogists*** by Emily Anne Groom
- Can find many types of family tree forms for sale on internet

SOUNDEX - Soundex was begun to help find surnames that were misspelled

- There is a Soundex code sheet (see handout) to explain how to find the Soundex code for your family name
- If the surname has a prefix, such as van, Von, De, Di, or Le, code it both with and without the prefix because it might be listed under either code. The surname vanDevanter, for example, could be V-531 or D-153. Mc and Mac are not considered prefixes
- Soundex converter can be found at www.rootsweb.com
 - Under “Other Tools and Resources” click on Soundex Converter
 - Enter surname and it will display your Soundex code and other names to try to look for in case they were misspelled or not transcribed correctly
- Some of the censuses are manually filed under the Soundex codes instead of the surnames themselves (1880, 1900, 1910 & 1920)
- If looking online at websites such as ancestry.com, most of them have Soundex built-in as one of their search options; the computer then searches for the Soundex versions of your surname

TIPS FOR HARD-TO-FIND INFORMATION

- Keep in mind that not everything you find will be 100% accurate and unless you have documents with matching dates, you cannot be 100% sure
 - Census information could be incorrect

- Family member giving the information could have the wrong age for one or more members of their family – i.e. a son or daughter giving information that the mother is 37 when really she is 35 etc.
- Family member may have gone by their middle name and not their given birth name
- Family member may have wrong state of parents' birth and/or marriage information
- Census taker could have heard "Cindy" for "Sandy," census taker
- Census taker could've wrote the name down without asking the correct spelling
- Some census takers only wrote down initials for first and/or middle names rather than the entire first name
- Some census takers had very bad handwriting and transcriptions may be totally wrong
- Ages on census are as of the date of the census; i.e. if the census was dated 6/1/1880 and the person did not have their birthday until 6/2/1885, their age will on that census will be four
- Use the Soundex code to help you find similar names in case when you are searching, it may come up under a different name
- If a spouse died and re-married – children may have two different moms or dads
- Information on death certificates usually filled out by a surviving family member, not always 100% accurate
- Birth records were not required many years ago (varies per state) and the information on them was provided by family members; i.e. a person could have said they were married to the father and it could be untrue. Even birthdates during that time, since most all of them were home births, could be untrue.

UPCOMING EVENT

- Tuesday October 8 at 10 a.m. – Lake County Public Library – Introduction to Ancestry Library Edition – basic instructions – limited to 7 participants
 - Pre-register 769-3541 EXT 335