

SCSH GENEALOGY CLUB



These articles were written by our member, Ron Gilmore, and published in 2021 in the View, Sun City Shadow Hills' monthly publication. They show the variety of issues that might arise doing research as well as some examples of the resources that are out there for you to use.

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Dog Licenses for Irish Genealogy Research - Are You Kidding?



Irish lore and genealogy were passed down verbally through song and poetry. With the 5th century arrival of Christianity, written records began. Then, the destruction started.

The Vikings did their best to sack and destroy the Irish monasteries, with the loss of many precious documents. The Vikings depredations were followed by repeated English invasions.

English warring and the subsequent “plantations” sought to convert Ireland into an English colony, displacing the natives. The land was surveyed and allotted out to English nobility, soldiers and merchant organizations. England endowed Ireland with the English church, the Church of Ireland. The Church of Ireland began recording births, deaths and marriages. And, in 1821, the country introduced the census.

Unfortunately, the Irish civil war of 1922 resulted in the sad destruction of most records held in Dublin. Researchers have turned to other sources of data. In 1823, the Church of Ireland introduced an “Allotment Survey” to establish a taxation system to support the church. The Griffith Valuation of 1847 to 1864 mapped the entire island to create a basis for property taxation. These archives have proven helpful to genealogists.

Now, Irish dog license records from 1810 have surfaced providing yet another tool for researchers. Who knew?

World Timeline

As you chip your way through your family history, building your family tree, you might also think of including some elements of the world history timeline. Aligning world events with relatives in your family tree will add immensely to the context of their lives.

Think of some of the questions you might come across:

1. Where were your ancestors during World War I?

More specifically, where were they when some of the great battles of the war occurred? Vimy Ridge? Passchendaele? The Somme?

2. Where were they during World War II?

a. Where were they when Italy surrendered?

b. Where were they when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor?

3. Did the Great Famine in Ireland of 1847 influence the emigration of your ancestors to America?

4. Did your ancestors celebrate Queen Victoria coming to the throne of Great Britain?

5. Who was the President of the United States when your ancestors were born?

You can find timelines of the world's salient events online. Wikipedia is a great source as well as a Google "Search." Once you have sourced a specific event, you can include these notes in the family history with a specific individual in your family tree.

The Identification of Jane Doe Via Genealogy - Parts One & Two

Jane Doe's nude, nearly skeletonized remains were found on August 30, 1987 near Anaheim, CA. Her remains were scattered over a grassy area just off the highway. Searchers found no clothes, no pocketbook, no car keys nor other clues to her identity. She had a chipped front tooth and 6 missing teeth.

Who was this young woman? What happened? Where was her family? Clearly, foul play was involved. But first, the police needed to know who was this woman. Dental impressions and searches of local dental records proved nothing. Missing persons files also yielded no clues. However, the police were able to secure a DNA sample.

* * *

Decades later, all the authorities had was that DNA sample.

Then, the DNA Doe Project (DDP), working through the Orange County Sheriff's Department of Anaheim, California, identified Anaheim Jane Doe as Tracey Coreen Hobson. On January 17, 2019 the Sheriff's Department announced the positive confirmation of the identification. Tracy, who was 20 years old at the time she disappeared in the summer of 1987, was a former Anaheim La Mirada High School student and Anaheim resident.

Tracy's identification was made possible by the work of DDP volunteers using genetic genealogy. Because genetic genealogy is not yet accepted as a legal form of identification, it can only be considered a lead in an investigation. The Coroner's Office then used forensic dentistry to legally confirm Tracy's identity. The Sheriff's Department is now focusing on the investigation of Tracy's homicide and bringing her killer to justice.

Check out the DDP website <https://dnadoeproject.org/case/anaheim-jane-doe/>

French Revolutionary Calendar

While researching some ancestors who lived in Alsace, France circa 1800, I struggled to make out the date on several of the online archive records.

Well, it seems that during the early days of the French Rebellion, the new order decided to implement a radical new weights and measures system totally divorced from royalty and religion. This was essentially the decimalization of France which eventually led to the metric system we have today. For the calendar, they devised a system that had four seasons, each with three months. Each month had three weeks of ten days each. And, they all had different names! According to the committee, the beginning of time began with the revolution.

In my case, one date was written as “The 10 Prairial of the year IX of the French Republic.” This actually translates to May 30, 1801. Who knew?

So, if you are researching old French records, beware of these strange date designations. The good news is that the Republic only used this calendar for a 12-year period from 1793 to 1805.

So ends your history lesson for today.



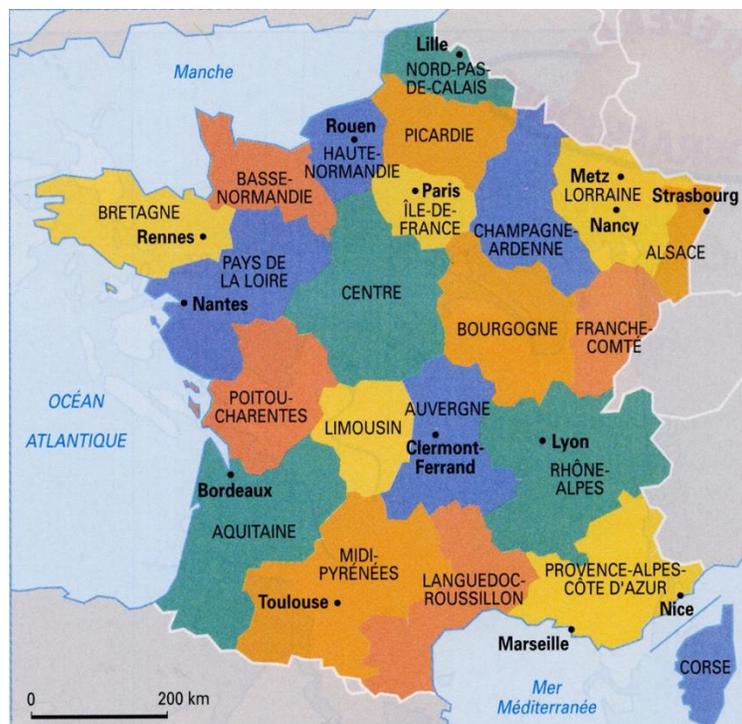
Les Optants of Alsace-Lorraine – They Opted Out!

If you are conducting research in the Alsace-Lorraine area of eastern France, there is an interesting set of records you may want to check out.

At the end of the Franco-Prussian War (circa 1871), France (since they lost the war) ceded parts of Alsace and Moselle to the newly formed country we now call Germany. Citizens of these areas were given the choice of staying in their villages and becoming German citizens or emigrating to somewhere in France.

The German government issued somewhat fuzzy instructions and thousands of residents packed up and left, travelling west to France. Others departed for Algeria where they were given plots of land. It was chaos until the German government finally clarified the new rules. Citizens who stayed were required to adjust their surnames to German versions. Not only were towns and villages renamed, but street names were also changed to German versions.

Thankfully, genealogical groups have captured these naturalization records and made them available online. Check out www.Optants.fr Here, you can search using a surname. Yes, it is in French but you can probably figure out how to navigate the site and read the outputs with Google Translate as your new best friend.



No One Gets Out of This Game Alive – Saving Your Work

If you are an amateur genealogist, you might want to think about what happens to your research work when you die? You may be lucky enough to have someone in your family who will inherit your work. But, others might not be so fortunate.

Recently, I attended a Zoom seminar presented by Thomas MacIntee on the topic of “Future Proofing Your Genealogical Research.” Thomas is well known and highly regarded genealogy speaker. Visit his website at www.genealogybargains.com

Any number of potential disasters can happen:

- Everything is tossed into the garbage when the house is cleaned out
- Old photos (with no names) - recycled with the newspapers
- Rare books - tossed
- Technology tools - redeployed
- Research threads and contacts - lost
- Hard drives - erased
- Online subscriptions - terminated

So, what to do? First, we need to craft an inventory, including any family artifacts we have. Anyone who inherits the research will benefit tremendously from this “roadmap.”

Alternatively, if a local historical society is interested, their first question is going to be “What do you have?”

Facebook and Genealogy

Probably not surprising but Facebook, one of the world’s dominant social media platforms is also a great platform for pursuing family history. You can join various Facebook Groups to help you advance your research. For example, there are Facebook Groups dedicated to

- Ethnic groups (e.g., Slovenian)
- Specific surnames (e.g., McCracken)
- Local historical societies (e.g., Marmora Historical Society)
- Specific geographic areas (e.g., Alsace-Lorraine, France)

In my family, my great-great-grandmother was a McCracken. So, I joined the McCracken group. Through this group, I learned that the McCracken surname originated in southeast Scotland and I have now connected with other McCracken researchers.

I also joined the Facebook group for the Banbridge Historical Society in Northern Ireland where my father's family originated. Recently, I posted an old family photo of the storefront of my grand Uncle Samuel's cycle shop. A chap commented on my post that he knew the place and had enjoyed his first cigarette at 11 years of age on the hood of a car with his Uncle Fred. That is, until his mother arrived on the scene. I have corresponded with my newfound cousin and just learned that he has a sister living only 25 miles from me here in North America.

So, give Facebook a try to meet your genealogy research needs!

Cousins of All Flavors

So, you have finally had your DNA tested. The results have come back and now you have a general idea from where your ancestors originated and their source groups, (for example, Scandinavian, Irish, Italian, African, etc.). In addition, for months you have been receiving notices from the DNA website indicating that they have found yet another person who is related to you.

You probably understand who a First Cousin is, but when they suggest the person might be a third cousin, once removed, that could be a bit puzzling. And, you have never heard of this person in your entire life! What to do? What does "once removed" really mean?

Well, first off, you can search the internet for a copy of a diagram that illustrates how your cousins are connected. This will be a great help. Simply Google search "Cousin Chart" and you will find several to choose from. Family Search has an excellent one; it is well explained and color-coded. Here is their webpage with a downloadable chart:

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/cousin-chart>

Once you have your diagram, you can populate it with relatives you know, it should help you become more accustomed to the terminology. Have fun.

YouTube and Genealogy

YouTube has an absolute ton of videos on a variety of genealogical topics. Simply pop into Youtube.com on your browser. For starters, select the “Ancestry” menu item on the top row. This will bring up a selection of videos on topics ranging from the general, beginner items through to detailed DNA sessions.

Alternatively, you can type in “Genealogy” into the Search bar and this will generate another host of family history topics such as the ones listed below:

- Genealogy
- Genealogy research
- Genealogy of morals
- Genealogy of Jesus
- Genealogy TV
- Genealogy of red black and white
- Genealogy roadshow
- Genealogy DNA
- Genealogy gems
- Genealogy of the holy war

Another option is to enter “Family History” into the Search bar.

Check it out and add this to your family history toolkit. Try spending an hour or so wandering through this great library of genealogy items.