



The Searcher

Suncoast Genealogy Society Newsletter

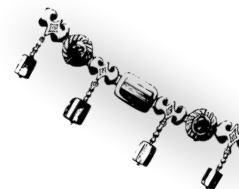
What's happening in August

23 August 2025 SGS Membership Meeting

1:30-4:00 pm, Palm Harbor Library

1:30 SGS Meeting, 2:00 Program

In Person Speaker



Bring in your Heirlooms and share their stories

Please send information about your heirloom and story to :
Jean VanHorn at jean.vh@verizon.net
so she can schedule the talks



Look What's Coming in September!

27 Sept 2025 SGS Membership Meeting

Palm Harbor Library, 1:30 SGS Meeting, 2:00 Program

Understanding AI in Genealogy: Foundations and Tools



Diana Elder AG, AGL

Learn how artificial intelligence can help with your family history research. This presentation covers what AI is, how it works, and which tools are most useful for genealogy. We'll look at popular AI assistants like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini and discuss what each one does best. You'll learn how to work effectively with AI, including how to ask questions that get the best results and how to verify the information it provides. Whether you're new to AI or already experimenting with it, this session will help you understand how to use these tools responsibly in your genealogy work.

President's Message



Genealogy happens everywhere, and if you've Dutch ancestors, there is a lot of info made freely available by the Dutch government.

On a recent trip to The Netherlands I visited Delft, where there is the Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) and where there are interred many of the Dutch royalty, in crypts below the main floor.

They also have a very elaborate family tree of the House of Orange-Nassau.

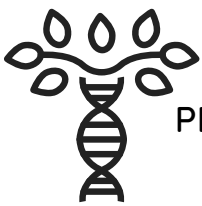
Too bad we all don't have someone to do this investigation for us. Well, then, we'd have to find another hobby. Until then, keep digging!

See more at

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nieuwe_Kerk_\(Delft\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nieuwe_Kerk_(Delft))

John Matthews

Genealogy and DNA IG



Monday, Aug 11 @

1:00-3:00 pm

PHL Conference Room

In-Person Meeting

open to everyone

**Topic: Family Search website
work session**

Next Meeting: Monday Sept 8



Come join as we will be diving into how to explore Historical Records Search which Family Search has a huge archive of historical documents



Genealogy Help Desk

Tues, Wed & Thurs

1:00-4:00 pm

PHL Genealogy Section



Need help researching online, breaking down a brick wall?
Beginners and members are encouraged to stop by!

Come join us at the Help Desk!

Board Meeting

All SGS Members are welcome to come to the Board meetings. They are on the first **Tuesday** of this month on ZOOM. The next meeting is on Sept 2, 2025 at 2:30pm

SGS Board 2024-2026

President: John Matthews

Vice President: Eugene Girardi

VP/Membership: Shari Harmon

VP/Programs: Jean Van Horn

Treasurer: Joan Baptist

Secretary: Marianne Bradley

Past President: Robert Pierro

Directors: Redd Slyker

Ann James

Kim Croco-Brooks

Committee Chairs & Others

Education: Ann James & Jean Van Horn

Facebook: Beth Bleich

Help Desk: Marianne Bradley

Historian: Ann James

Library Liaison: Peter Cannon

Publicity: **OPEN POSITION**

Newsletter: Kim Croco-Brooks

Registered Agent: Shari Harmon

Sunshine: Mary Jane Hough

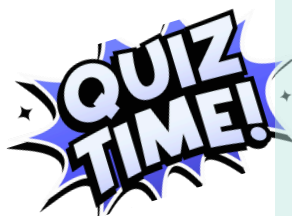
Web Development: John Matthews

DNA IG: Robert Pierro & John Matthews



Rhama Atwell

John Mangan



When was the word
“genealogy” first used,
according to Merriam-
Webster?

- a. 14th Century
- b. 17th Century
- c. 5th Century

ANSWER: Bottom of page 4

Questions?



Check our website:
sgsfl.com

Email us:
info@sgsfl.com

Connect with us on
[Suncoast Genealogy Society Facebook](#)

Welcome New
MEMBERS

Angie Jones
Mary Port zootech74@gmail.com
m.r.port@aol.com Henry Pniewski
hpniewski@outlook.com

Proud Partner with



Suncoast Genealogy Society

c/o Palm Harbor Library
2330 Nebraska Ave.
Palm Harbor, FL 34683



Our Genealogy Friends

Pinellas Genealogy Society

Saturday, Aug 16 @ 10 am-12 pm

Hybrid Meeting & via Zoom

Topic: How to Draw Metes & Bounds Plats Map

Presented by Karen Fortin

<https://pinellaskenealogysociety.com/>

Florida Genealogical Society – Tampa

<https://fgstampa.org/>

Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

<http://www.jgstb.org/>



East Lake Community Library

4125 E Lake Rd. S, Palm Harbor, FL
34685

Contact the library at 727-773-2665

Largo Public Library

120 Central Park Dr, Largo, FL 33771

Contact the library at 727-586-7410

Tarpon Springs Library

Genealogy Research Assistance

(727) 943-4922 ext 6010

NOTE: August meeting is CANCELED

<http://tarponlibrary.org/genealogy/>

SAR, Clearwater Chapter

Members meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month,
Sept thru May, 11:30 am,
Dunedin Country Club.

Go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/SARClearwater/>
for more information.

DAR, Caladesi Chapter

Members meet the 3rd Monday of the month
Sept thru May, 11:30 am, North Dunedin Baptist
Church. Contact Debbie Smyth,
dsmyth927@gmail.com for more information.

Family Searcher Center

St Petersburg/Seminole

9000 106th Ave N.

Largo, FL. 33777-1147

Hours:

Tues 10 am-6 pm;

Thurs 10 am-9 pm;

Sat 10 am-4 pm

FL_StPetersburg@familyhistorymail.org

Services: Computers, Photo negative
scanner, Photo scanner, Printer

Answer: a. 14th Century



Getting Involved

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

We are looking for someone who would like to take on this position.

Please contact
John Matthews

GENEALOGY HELP DESK

Hone your research skills while helping others. It's the most rewarding job there is!

We can train you! Contact **Marianne Bradley** to volunteer and/or set up training time with one of the other volunteers.

Other Local Resources

Palm Harbor Museum

2043 Curlew Rd, Palm Harbor, FL 34683

Phone: (727) 724 -3054

Hours: Thurs, Fri and Sat; 10 am to 2 pm

<https://www.palmharbormuseum.com>

Clearwater Historical Society

610 S Fort Harrison, Clearwater, FL 33756

Phone: (727) 754-8019

Hours: Wednesdays & Saturdays; 10 am-2 pm

<https://www.clearwaterhistoricalsociety.org>

Tarpon Springs Area Historical Society

Historic Train Depot. Downtown Tarpon Springs, FL

160 East Tarpon Ave, Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

Phone: 727-943-4624

Hours: Wednesdays-Saturdays: 11:00 am-3:00 pm

<http://tarponspringsareahistoricalociety.org>

Pinellas County Historical Society

<https://pchs.winniedesignandphoto.com>

USF-Special Collections

140 7th Ave S, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Phone: 727-873-4123

<https://lib.usf.edu>

Did you know

Anyone that recruits two people to join SGS will receive a free one-year membership.



FACEBOOK GROUPS

Are you part of our **SGS Facebook Group** or any other **Genealogy Facebook groups**? There are many groups that you can join.

What unusual way have you found information about your ancestor

My Cousin, Robert Girardi

For me the most unusual way to find ancestors had to do researching my adopted cousin. Adoption records have always been sealed by the court from public view. The records are kept at state level. And as you can expect each state's privacy laws are different, resulting in your research to be anything from a brickwall to varying degrees of difficulty.

At the time I did my research, Pennsylvania's adoption records were behind an impenetrable brickwall. This caused my cousin, Robert Girardi, persistent anguishing curiosity to know:


Who was he? Who gave him birth? What was his original name? And are there any relatives somewhere out there?

It wasn't until Robert reached middle age that some of the lifelong tormenting questions were answered. The revelations came from the efforts of an Uncle, the brother of his adoptive mother. By the best of good luck the Uncle made the right contacts to obtain a look at the secret papers and to take notes, but no copies. With this information Robert was able to meet his birth mother two times before she died and also a half-brother and half-sister.

Utilizing SGS's wonderful Help Desk, Lew Harris(now retired) provided me with credible documents from Ancestry.com. Lew was enormously helpful finding 77 relatives including their vital statistics spanning five generations in Pennsylvania and Virginia and also in Eastern Europe.

So what did I do with this Gold Mine of information? I wrote a 28-page Bio on Robert to include color and black & white photos. It was my Christmas gift to everyone in the Girardi Clan that I had addresses for. Like Robert we were all curious about his ancestry.

BY EUGENE GIRARDI



Do you have an heirloom from your ancestors and you want to share your story about it? August is the date.
Tell Jean Van Horn what you want to share.

Do you have questions about how to research, where to look for your ancestors, have a brickwall that you can not break? Get your questions ready for Megan Smolenyak by November.

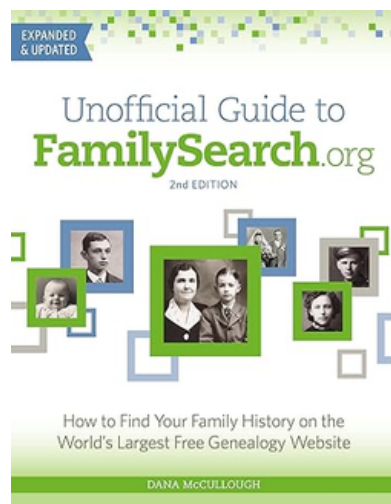


DNA Mentors Available

Struggling with understanding your DNA results? Have questions for with you can't find answers? Email info@sgsfl.com to get connected with a Mentor.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Do you have an idea on how to improve our newsletter? Do you have a story or a breakthrough? Is there something you would like to share - a genealogy tip, a website or a an upcoming event? Email your ideas to Kim Croco-Brooks: inhislovinghands10@yahoo.com



UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO FAMILYSEARCH.ORG 2ND EDITION

By Dana McCullough

Discover your ancestry on FamilySearch.org, the world's largest free genealogy website. This fully-updated in-depth user guide shows you how to find your family in the site's databases of more than 3.5 billion names and millions of digitized historical records spanning the globe.

Learn how to maximize all of FamilySearch.org's research tools—including hard-to-find features—to extend your family tree in America and the old country.

IN THIS BOOK, YOU'LL FIND:

- Step-by-step strategies to craft search queries that find ancestors fast
- Practical pointers for locating your ancestors in record collections that aren't searchable
- Detailed overviews of FamilySearch.org's major U.S. collections, with helpful record explanations to inform your research
- Guidance for using FamilySearch.org's vast record collections from Europe, Canada, Mexico and 100-plus countries around the world
- Tips for creating and managing your family tree on FamilySearch.org
- Secrets to utilizing user-submitted genealogies, the site's revamped Digital Library with digitized family history books, and the FamilySearch catalog of 2.4 million offline resources.
- Expanded coverage of the FamilySearch mobile app, and updates on FamilySearch-compatible services and apps
- A new chapter on accessing records on-site at the Family History Library, local FamilySearch Centers and affiliate libraries
- Worksheets and checklists to track your research progress
- Illustrated step-by-step examples teach you exactly how to apply these tips and techniques to your own research.

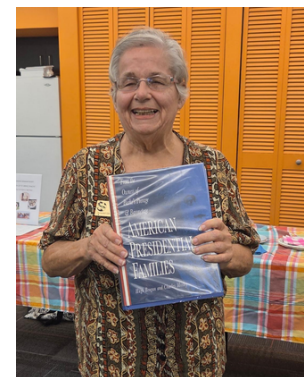
Whether you're new to FamilySearch.org or you're a longtime user, you'll find the guidance you need to discover your ancestors and make the most of the site's valuable resources.

JULY MEETING



Karen Fortin had taken us through the steps of the 102 passengers of the Mayflower. Why they left the world that they knew, what they endured, their tragedies & triumphs for 65 days of the storm-tossed & continuous cold weather on the Mayflower.

Karen gave us many, many sources to follow-up on, to dig deeper in our Mayflower ancestors.



Peggy Tooney
won "American Presidential
Families"
by Hugh Brogan & Charles
Mosley



If you have one of the following 25 surnames in your ancestry, you too may find one of these passengers in your family history:

*• Alden • Allerton • Billington • Bradford • Brewster • Brown •
Chilton • Cooke • Doty • Eaton • Fletcher • Fuller • Hopkins •
Howland • More • Mullins • Priest • Rogers • Samson • Soule •
Standish • Tilley • Warren • White • Winslow*



2025 MEETINGS

23 August Show and Tell - Members
 27 September Understanding AI in Genealogy: Foundations and Tools
 - speaker: Diana Elder
 25 October Seminar 1. Tasks AI Can Do for Your Genealogy Research
 at Lightning Speed 2. Seeing Family History Through Google Lens
 - speaker: Lisa Louise Cook
 22 November Questions & Answers - speaker: Megan Smolenyak
 2 December Christmas Party at Johnny's Italian Restaurant

Joan Baptist is a member of Suncoast Genealogy Society and has been its Treasurer since 2021. She has been a hobbyist genealogist since the late 1970s, when she embarked on a decades-long journey to identify her maternal biological ancestors. Over the years Joan adapted to, learned, and applied to her research efforts all the new technology and resources that became available.

In more recent years, Joan has turned her attention and research to her paternal French-Canadian roots, becoming proficient in Canadian genealogical research. It is this specialized knowledge that she enjoys sharing with others.

Joan has lived in the Tampa Bay area for over sixty years and has a varied professional background, including mortgage banking, project management, and technical writing of online help and policies and procedures. In her retirement she shares her Clearwater home with a sweet little YorkiePoo, Maggie, and a Maine Coon cat Gracie (named after her French-Canadian great-great grandmother Gracieuse).

Register on our library calendar!

SCAN ME

EAST LAKE Community Library

Suncoast Genealogy Society
Palm Harbor, Florida
Presents

Genealogy Research in Quebec and Maritime Provinces
Wednesday, September 24, 2025, 6:00pm

Learn how to research ancestors from Quebec and the Maritime provinces despite the French language barrier.

Discover the rich history of New France colonization and how ancestors adapted to social and political changes.

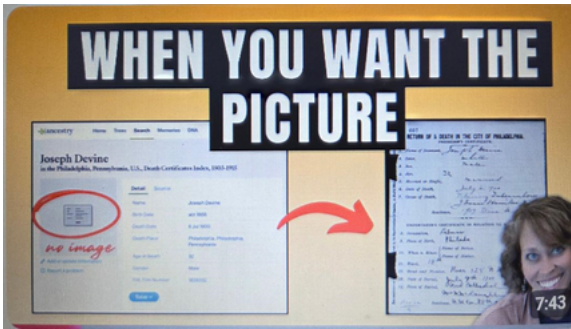
Joan Baptist from the Suncoast Genealogy Society will provide historical context to aid your research, and so much more!

For more information about the Suncoast Genealogy Society, please visit: <https://sgsfl.com/>

East Lake Community Library
 4125 East Lake Road
 Palm Harbor, FL 34685
 727-773-2665 (Book)
eastlakelibrary.org

Link to website page: [Genealogy Research in Quebec and Maritime Provinces with Joan Baptist from Suncoast Genealogy | East Lake Community Library](#)

GENEALOGY HINTS GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL ON YOUTUBE



Do you have your Sherlock Holmes detective eyes on? Are you looking for ways to go deeper into your genealogy research? Here is a video for you.



Finding the images not available on Ancestry

Finding the images not available on Ancestry in this YouTube video, Aimee Cross will show you 3 ways on how to see the image when you can **NOT see them.**

1. Clicking on the source
2. If you see the FHL Number
3. Highlighting the source information

Aimee Cross has 245 videos. She loves researching her family to the point of being obsessed. Check out her website, which she is a personal coach, individual & group in-person sessions in genealogy, you will receive step-by-step handouts, she can help with those difficult brick walls and many more.

Need a speaker? She is the one for your group.



Contact: Aimee Cross
aimee@ancestryaimee.com
 (214) 509-7292

Proposed Bylaws

Proposed Bylaws to be Voted on at the August SGS Meeting

The proposed revisions to the Bylaws were published in the July Searcher, fulfilling the requirement that the membership receive the proposed revisions 30 days prior voting.

The book, Bylaws Workbook A Handbook for New & Established Societies, was used as a guideline. Several of the changes were to the format to be in compliance with correct format and to eliminate redundant sentences.

To review the revisions to the content, go the SGS website, and compare what is posted there to the revisions published in the Searcher last month.

Submitted by the Bylaws Revision Committee



Proud Partnership with



Suncoast Genealogy Society

25 Oct 2025 SGS Mini-Seminar

1:00-4:00 pm, Palm Harbor Library
Speaker Live on Zoom

Lisa Louise Cooke

October Hybrid Mini-Seminar

Lisa Louise Cooke is the author of several books including *The Genealogist's Google Toolbox*, 3rd edition. She produces the popular Genealogy Gems Podcast, as well as videos through the Genealogy Gems YouTube channel and a Premium Membership service at her website at GenealogyGems.com. She also writes a regular column for Family Tree Magazine and produces the Family Tree Magazine Podcast.



TOPICS

Make AI Your Personal Genealogy Assistant

Discover how Artificial Intelligence tools can act as your personal genealogy assistant. Learn the best strategies for using AI to help you with a variety of genealogy tasks, from organizing information to identifying new research avenues. This session also covers how to automate repetitive tasks and streamline your genealogical workflow. Discover the incredible potential of AI to enhance your genealogy research!

Photo Identification & Discovery: 3 Case Studies

In this session, you'll see how free tech tools and some creative sleuthing strategies turned unidentified photos into identified treasures. These techniques are also excellent for making new photo discoveries. You can do this too, and this class will show you how!

Members - \$10, Guests - \$25

See Registration form on website: www.SGSFL.com

For more information go to: www.SGSFL.com

Member Supported. Public Always Welcome



Suncoast Genealogy Society

Fall Mini-Seminar Registration Form

Saturday, 25 October 2025, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

at the Palm Harbor Library, Clearwater, or on Zoom

Featuring: Lisa Louise Cooke

Register by mail and check. **Registrations must be postmarked by Tues., Oct. 21, 2025.**

PLEASE PRINT:

Name(s) _____

Address _____ Phone: _____

_____ ****Email:** _____

****Email is required to receive the meeting link.**

Please indicate if you are: _____ Member of Suncoast Genealogy Society (SGS) or a _____ Non-Member

If you are a member of another genealogy society, please let us know which one

Please indicate if you expect to attend ____ in person ____ via Zoom

SEMINAR FEE(S): (Add number of registrations) _____ \$10 SGS Member _____ \$25 Non-Member

\$ _____ Check Total Check # _____

NOTE: No refund requests accepted after Tues. 21 Oct. 2025

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: SUNCOAST GENEALOGY SOCIETY

Mail check and completed Registration Form to:

**Shari Harmon
1864 Northwood Drive
Clearwater, FL 33764**

For questions or more information email: **info@SGSFL.com**

Reminder: Registration envelope **MUST** be postmarked by **Tues, 21 Oct. 2025**