



# The Searcher

**Suncoast Genealogy Society Newsletter**

**What's happening in September**

**Check our website:**

[sgsfl.com](http://sgsfl.com)

**Email us:**

[info@sgsfl.com](mailto:info@sgsfl.com)

**Connect with us on**

[Suncoast Genealogy Society](#)  
[Facebook](#)

**Suncoast Genealogy Society**

c/o Palm Harbor Library

2330 Nebraska Ave.

Palm Harbor, FL 34683

## 26 Sept 2026 Membership Meeting

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

1:30 SGS Meeting, 2:00 Program

Speaker live on Zoom



**Brian Rhinehart**

**Researching Your  
19th Century Ancestors on Fold3 --  
Is there a better way?**

**Ever get confused searching on Fold3?**

Learn what records are available for your 19th-century military ancestors there and pick up some search strategies to narrow down what you're looking for. Yes, there is a better way to search!

Brian Rhinehart provides on-site research and record retrieval at the National Archives in Washington DC, focusing primarily on 19th century military records (Civil War, War of 1812, Mexican War, Indian Wars, Spanish American War) and federal land records (bounty land, homestead land, etc). I am open to other projects aside from these, as long as the records can be accessed at the National Archives in Washington DC.

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**Member supported. Free and Open to the Public!**  
**For more information about SGS visit: [www.SGSFL.com](http://www.SGSFL.com)**



**Suncoast  
Genealogy  
Society**

Palm Harbor, Florida

**Palm Harbor Library**  
You. Us. Together.

## *SGS Fall Mini-Seminar*

**Saturday, 24 Oct 2026, 1:00-4:00 pm**

**Palm Harbor Library**

**\$10 for Members - \$25 for Non-Members**

**All walk-ins \$25**



**Debbie Smyth**  
**In-Person**

### **FINDING TREASURES IN THE NATION'S ATTIC: Tips and Tricks for Navigating the Catalog of the National Archives**

The National Archives and Records Administration ("NARA") has been nicknamed the Nation's Attic and contains a treasure trove of genealogical gold. But a researcher may need a treasure map to conduct searches in its catalog to uncover the records buried in its stacks. This presentation will explain the importance of identifying the record groups and record series that might hold items of interest. It will cover how the catalog is organized and how to choose effective search terms. The presentation will conclude with case studies to demonstrate how these strategies can be applied to solve genealogical research problems and uncover valuable historical records.

### **Intermission: Snacks & Prizes**

### **STRAPPED FOR CASH: Records of Poor Ancestors and the Stories They Tell**

Researching ancestors who had financial struggles often requires a strategic approach and unfamiliar records. Whether they were born poor or fell upon hard times, we'll explore their stories through town minutes, records of almshouses, sheriffs, and charities, legal and financial documents, and more. We'll also consider indirect evidence, such as changes in crop prices and the value of wages, that may suggest reasons for our ancestors' struggles.



**Pam Vestal**  
**Live on Zoom**

**For registration information visit: <https://SGSFL.com>**

## President's Message



September always means back to school or get back to work to me. We have a good topic for our September meeting as Fold 3 has so many ways to research our ancestors. They have been working hard on scanning 1812 soldiers' records, and I have been waiting for them to get to the "T" section. Brian Rhinehart will help us find those records and get us back on track with our research.

Also, we have a wonderful October Seminar being planned. As a past president, Debbie Smyth, is a favorite speaker and she will be helping us to get those records from NARA rather than having to go to Washington, DC. Pam Vestal will be a new speaker for us with a very interesting topic to look forward to. Sign up sheets will be available at the library so sign up as soon as possible.

Join in the preparations by contacting Ann James to help man tables, donate items for the used book sale table and donate food. It will be great fun if we all pitch in.

*Jean Turner Van Horn*

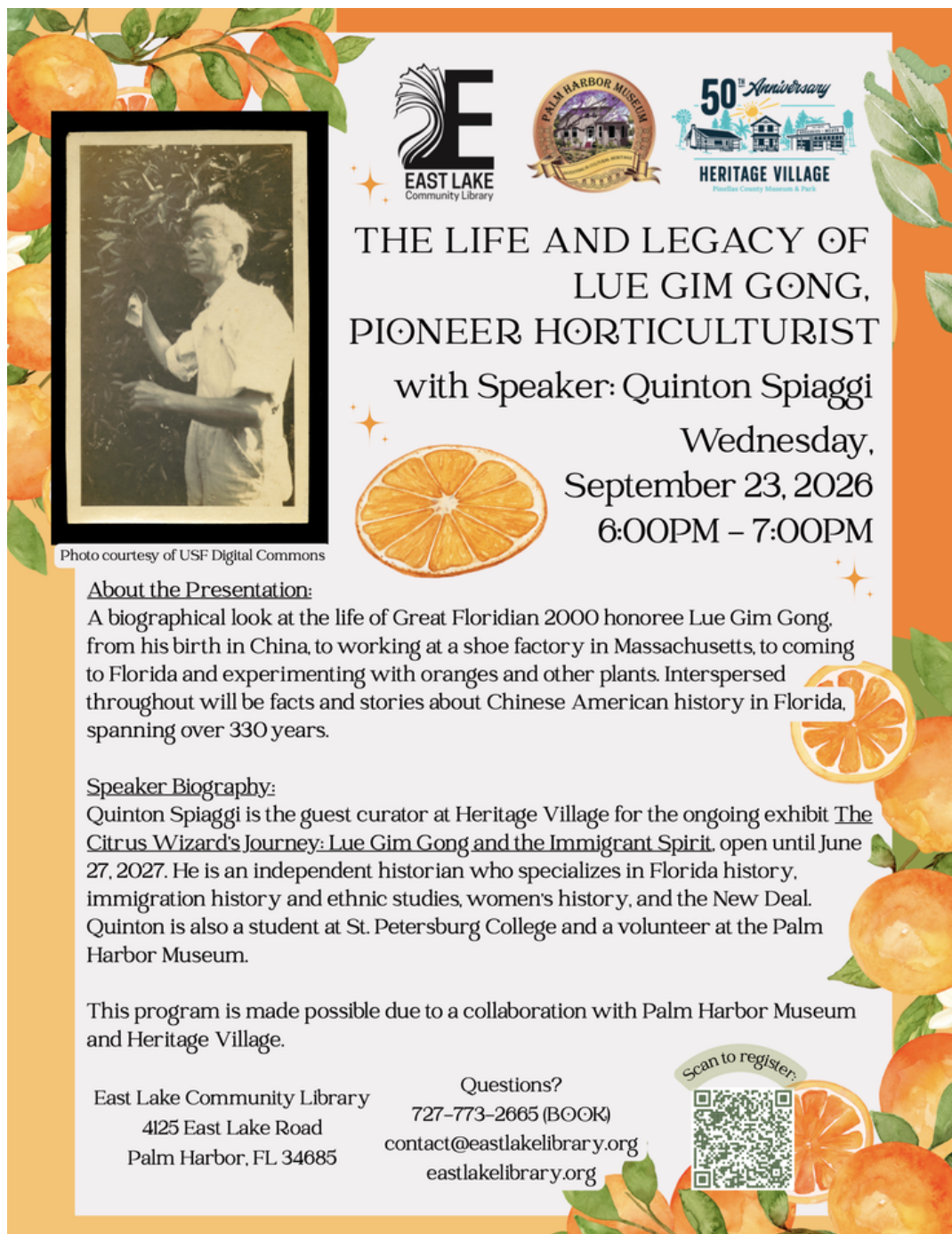
## SGS Board 2026-2028

### Board of Directors

**President:** Jean Van Horn  
**Vice President:** Robert Pierro  
**VP/Membership:** Shari Harmon  
**VP/Programs:** Ann James  
**Treasurer:** Joan Baptist  
**Secretary:** Marianne Bradley  
**Past President:** John Matthews  
**Directors:** Sue Martin  
                   Peggy Toohey  
                   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:** Jenny Kidd  
**Newsletter:** Kim Croco-Brooks  
**Registered Agent:** Shari Harmon  
**Sunshine:** Mary Jane Hough  
**Web Development:** John Matthews  
**DNA IG:** Robert Pierro & John Matthews



**EAST LAKE**  
Community Library

**PALM HARBOR MUSEUM**

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**HERITAGE VILLAGE**  
Pinellas County Museum & Park

## THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF LUE GIM GONG, PIONEER HORTICULTURIST

with Speaker: Quinton Spiaggi

Wednesday,  
September 23, 2026  
6:00PM – 7:00PM

Photo courtesy of USF Digital Commons

About the Presentation:  
A biographical look at the life of Great Floridian 2000 honoree Lue Gim Gong, from his birth in China, to working at a shoe factory in Massachusetts, to coming to Florida and experimenting with oranges and other plants. Interspersed throughout will be facts and stories about Chinese American history in Florida, spanning over 330 years.

Speaker Biography:  
Quinton Spiaggi is the guest curator at Heritage Village for the ongoing exhibit The Citrus Wizard's Journey: Lue Gim Gong and the Immigrant Spirit, open until June 27, 2027. He is an independent historian who specializes in Florida history, immigration history and ethnic studies, women's history, and the New Deal. Quinton is also a student at St. Petersburg College and a volunteer at the Palm Harbor Museum.

This program is made possible due to a collaboration with Palm Harbor Museum and Heritage Village.

East Lake Community Library  
4125 East Lake Road  
Palm Harbor, FL 34685

Questions?  
727-773-2665 (BOOK)  
contact@eastlakelibrary.org  
eastlakelibrary.org

Scan to register:



## **Our annual Mini Seminar is coming up October 24, 2026.**

We are looking for two more volunteers to help  
with the seminar.

We need members to help with refreshments.  
Three or four people are needed for set up and take down  
of the room.

If you can help contact Ann James at (727) 791-1983 or  
[jamesamsj@aol.com](mailto:jamesamsj@aol.com).

## Genealogy and DNA IG



**Monday, Sep 14@**  
**1:00-3:00 pm**  
 PHL Conference Room  
**In-Person Meeting**  
 open to everyone

**Topic: Ancient DNA**

**Next Meeting: Monday, Oct 12**

## DNA Mentors Available



Are you wondering how to understand your DNA results? Do you have questions about your DNA?

Email [info@sgsfl.com](mailto:info@sgsfl.com) to connected with a Mentor.

## Board Meeting

All SGS Members are welcome to come to the Board meetings.

Members should contact a board member for the Zoom link.

They are on the first **Monday** of the month on ZOOM.

The next meeting is on Oct 5 @ 2:30pm

## 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!**

**Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday Tech with John**

SEPTEMBER *HAPPY birthday*

Kathy Angelillis  
 Beth Bleich  
 Barrie Carson  
 Kim Croco-Brooks  
 Debbe Hagner  
 Susan Luce  
 Savilla Marshall  
 Debbie Smyth  
 Lorraine Spicer  
 Peter Van Horn



**DONATE NOW**



As our October Mini-Seminar is approaching, we need your help. Start looking through your genealogy books, resources, and knick Knacks that are related to genealogy that you no longer need.

Donate them to Ann James or drop them off at the Palm Harbor Library in the Genealogy Department.



## Our Genealogy Friends

### **Pinellas Genealogy Society**

**Saturday, Sep 19 @ 11 am- 1 pm**

**Hybrid Meeting & via Zoom**

**Topic: Mapping Ireland's Records**

**Presented by John Grenham live from Dublin, Ireland**

<https://pinellaskenealogysociety.com/>

### **Florida Genealogical Society – Tampa**

<https://fgstampa.org/>

### **Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay**

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

### **Tarpon Springs Library**

**Genealogy Research Assistance**

**(727) 943-4922 ext 6010**

**Monday, Sep 14 @ 6:30 pm**

**Topic: Genealogy Tips For Beginners**

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

**Debbe Hagner available**

**Appt only**



### **East Lake Community Library**

4125 E Lake Rd S, Palm Harbor, FL

Contact the library at 727-773-2665

### **Largo Public Library**

120 Central Park Dr, Largo, FL 33771

Contact the library at 727-586-7410



### **Manatee Genealogical Society**

**First Tuesday on Zoom**

<https://mgsfl.org>

### **SAR, Clearwater Chapter**

Members meet the 3rd Wednesday of the month, Sept thru May, 11:30 am, The Regency Oaks, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 2751 Regency Oaks Blvd., Clearwater.

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](mailto:dsmyth927@gmail.com) for more information

### **Family Search Center**

**St Petersburg/Seminole**

9000 106<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:FL_StPetersburg@familyhistorymail.org)

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



## Canadian Citizenship by Descendancy

If you've ever traced a family line back to a Canadian-born grandparent or great-grandparent and wondered whether that connection has a current significance for you, the answer is Yes. On December 15, 2025, Canada's Bill C-3 came into force, sweeping away a rule that had shut out generations of descendants from claiming citizenship through their Canadian ancestry. This is not a new immigration pathway and doesn't require moving to Canada or taking an oath. If you qualify, you're already a citizen. The application isn't to become a citizen, but to obtain official proof of citizenship you already hold.

### What Changed

Since 2009, Canada had enforced what was known as the "first-generation limit." Under that rule, only the first generation born outside Canada to a Canadian parent could inherit citizenship by descent. This left a large population of so-called "Lost Canadians" with a real ancestral connection to the country but no legal claim to it. Canada's Bill C-3 removed the first-generation limit.

### Who This Affects

The Canadian government estimates the number of eligible persons could reach into the millions once distant ancestry is factored in, particularly among descendants of Canadians who emigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century. Reporting this spring noted a sharp jump in applications from Americans in particular, along with rising demand at Quebec's vital records archive (BANQ) as people scramble to document Quebec-born ancestors.

### How to Apply: The Basics

First and foremost, determine if you are eligible to apply for your certificate by reviewing the requirements on the Canadian government's web site ([canada.ca](https://canada.ca)) on the IRCC page. The application itself is a single form: CIT 0001, "Application for a Citizenship Certificate (Proof of Citizenship)," also available on [canada.ca](https://canada.ca). Here's the general process:

1. **Confirm** the chain of descendancy.
2. **Gather documents** for each link in the chain, which typically means

requesting and paying for certified copies of vital records from the applicable state or government agency.

3. **Complete the CIT 0001 form.**
4. **Include** all other required documents listed in the Checklist provided on the IRRC page, plus a cover letter.
5. **Pay the government fee** — CAD \$75 per applicant, payable only through IRCC's online payment portal.
6. **Submit.**
7. **Wait.** As of mid-2026, processing times are running roughly 10-18 months. Simple, well-documented single-generation cases tend to move faster than multi-generational claims or cases with name discrepancies.

If IRCC needs more documentation, they'll request it by mail, and you have 90 days to respond.

This summary is for general informational purposes. If you are considering an application carefully review the official instructions on [canada.ca](https://canada.ca), since requirements can vary by individual circumstance, and consider professional legal advice for complex or contested cases.

**SOURCES:** Library of Parliament and [openparliament.ca](https://openparliament.ca) legislative records for Bill C-3; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada ([canada.ca](https://canada.ca)) application guides and document checklists for form CIT 0001; CIC News reporting on processing times and applicant guidance.

**Submitted by Joan Baptist**

## **2026 MEETINGS**

**26 Sep: Finding Your 19th Century Ancestors on Fold3**

**Speaker: Brian Rhinehart**

**24 Oct: SGS Fall Mini-Seminar - Finding Treasures in the Nations's Attic**

**Speaker: Debbie Smyth**

**Strapped for Cash: Records of Proof Ancestors and the Stories They Tell**

**Speaker: Pam Vestal**

**8 Dec: Christmas Party - Johnnie's Italian Restaurant**



## Canadaian Ethnicity and Heritage Websites

“Canadian” as an ethnic identity emerged in the 1996 Canadian census and is self-reported by about **15.6% of the population** (5.67 million people).

It is most common among **White Canadians** whose ancestral origins are from France or the British Isles, often due to generational distance from those roots. French-speaking Canadians with settler backgrounds are more likely to identify as “Canadian” than as French, while many English-speaking Canadians with long-standing families in Canada still identify with their European ancestry.

Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, generally do not identify as “Canadian” in this sense, as their identities are distinct and rooted in their own nations. Visible minorities may choose “Canadian” to express a shared ethno-cultural identity.

### WEBSITES

#### Canada.ca

<https://www.canada.ca/en/library-archives.html>

Library and Archives Canada are the national archives of the country. In its vast collection are a great many records pertaining to the fur trade. Some of the most important records for genealogical research. You will find federal records, early documents, private collections, cartography, military records, genealogy and much more.

#### mikegravel.org

<https://www.mikegravel.org/is-canadian-an-ethnicity-or-nationality>

#### thedatainsider.com

<https://thedatainsider.com/canada-population-demographics-by-ethnicity>

#### EBSCO

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/ethnic-and...>

#### McGill University

<https://www.mcgill.ca/libraries/using-libraries>

#### Québec.ca

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/culture/librairies-directories-and-archives>

#### BAnQ

<https://www.banq.qc.ca>

#### Archives of Ontario

<https://www.archives.gov.on.ca>

**If you are researching your Canadian roots and need more help, you can reach out to Joan Baptist.**

## SGS MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

SUNCOAST GENEALOGY SOCIETY  
MINUTES FOR GENERAL MEETING  
August 22, 2026

Meeting came to Order 1:30 PM

Secretary Report for July- No discussion. Accepted as written.

Membership Report: Shari Harmon. No new members. 68 members. 18 members attended, 1 by Zoom and 3 quests.

Treasurer Report: no discussion

Programs: Ann James

Today's program is Christine Cohen-  
Mysterious Codes, Passenger Manifest  
Letters & Numbers

September 26: Brian Rhinehart-  
Researching your 19th Century  
Ancestors on Fold 3

October Seminar: 2 Presentations-  
Debbie Smyth, Researching the  
NARA Website,  
and Pam Vestal, Records of our  
Poor Ancestors.

November there is no meeting  
because of Thanksgiving

December 8: Christmas Party

Looking ahead for January or  
March-Finding Our Strange  
Matches

Old Business-none

New business-none

Meeting adjourned at 1:35 PM

Ann James introduced Christine  
Cohen at 2:00 PM live on Zoom.

Peggy Toohey for Marianne  
Bradley



Gramps is a free software project and community. They strive to produce a genealogy program that is both intuitive for hobbyists and feature-complete for professional genealogists. It is a community project, created, developed and governed by genealogists.

<https://www.grampsweb.org/>



"We are the chosen. In each family, there is one who seems called to find the ancestors. To put flesh on their bones and make them live again, to tell the family story and to feel that somehow they know and approve. Doing genealogy is not a cold gathering of facts, but instead, breathing life into all who have gone before. We are the storytellers of the tribe."

## AUGUST MEETING



Christine Cohen

# Mysterious Codes

## Passenger Manifest Letters and Numbers

Christine Cohen brought a wealth of expertise to the table, making the complex process of deciphering historic immigration documents simple and accessible. Her detailed insights helped us break down the mysterious codes, letters, and numbers that often stall research.

Her handout is an absolute treasure trove for anyone tracing an ancestor's voyage. Packed with invaluable resources, it provides direct paths to essential inquiries, medical conditions, verification of landing, causes of detention, necessary forms, and so much more. Complete with a comprehensive key to historic abbreviations, this guide is an essential companion for unraveling your family's immigration story.

This handout is a gem to keep.

[ChristineCohenGenealogy@Gmail.com](mailto:ChristineCohenGenealogy@Gmail.com)



Shari Harmon  
won Genetic  
Genealogy in Practice