



ANCESTORS

Bartholomew County Genealogical Society
Oct - Dec Q4 2019 and Jan - Mar Q1 2020 ISSN: 1933-5164 Vol 29 Issue 4 and Vol 30 Issue 1

2020 BCGS Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, all sessions begin at 10:00 am in the Red Room of the Bartholomew County Public Library

Saturday, Jan 18

GENEALOGY 101 - with Annette Blount
BARTH CO GENEALOGY 101 - with Donna Kuhlman

Saturday, Feb 22

S.K.I.L.L.S. : SCANNING - with Becky Speaker and Toni Whiteside
(for Members Only - become a member & join us !)

Saturday, Mar 28

TBD (possible visit to BCHS or IN State Archives)
(let your favorite be known !)

Saturday, Apr 25

S.K.I.L.L.S. : GRAVESTONE CLEANING AT GOD'S ACRE - with Donna Kuhlman
(for Members Only - become a member & join us !)

Saturday, May 2

TBD

Saturday, Jul 25

SHELBY CO HISTORICAL SOCIETY / CENTER OUTING

Saturday, SEP ?

TBD

Saturday, OCT 24

S.K.I.L.L.S. : TBD
(for Members Only - become a member & join us !)

Saturday, Nov 21

BARTH CO BICENTENNIAL KICKOFF - with Dr. Iorio

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Editor's Note: Last quarter's Issue of Ancestors was not published due to a family emergency. This issue is combining the information from last quarter as an attempt to keep you updated. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. Thanks for your understanding.

Editor's Note: Many thanks to all BCGS Board Members for their time and articles to make Ancestors the "Voice of BCGS" ! As a courtesy, and to insure the personal communication with each of you, their columns are not edited. Hope you enjoy !



President's Prose -by Becky Speaker

Please save the dates for some upcoming BCGS programs, all at 10am on Saturdays in the Red Room at the Bartholomew County Library:

January 18: Genealogy 101 & Bartholomew County Genealogy 101 (led by Genealogy Librarian Annette Blount and County Genealogist Donna Kuhlman)

February 22: SKILLS – Scanning skills (led by Becky/Toni) - training on scanning, as well as scanning some local records that can be posted on the Bartholomew County page on the Indiana Genealogical Society page (<http://www.indgensoc.org/membersonly/county/index.php#bartholomew>)

March 28: (later to avoid Spring Break) -- Possible visit at either Bartholomew County Historical Society or Indiana State Archives - stay tuned!

April 25: SKILLS – Gravestone cleaning at God's Acre (Donna will demonstrate proper techniques, and then clean 10 gravestones during the session - hopefully warmer weather!)

We're still working on further programs, but we do have a few dates locked down:

July 25: Outing ... Shelby County Historical Society/Center

Oct 24: SKILLS

Nov: 21: Dr. Tamara Stone Iorio ... Kicking off 2021's Bartholomew County Bicentennial!

We're already starting to work on some exciting plans for Bartholomew County's 200th birthday in 2021 - we're looking for programs devoted to Bartholomew County History, as well as ideas for community service to help us preserve Bartholomew County history. Please let us know if you have any ideas or would be willing to support services like scanning, organizing, etc.

Also, it's time to renew your dues, \$10 for individuals and \$15 for couples. If you can't make it to our January program, you can send your dues check to:

Bartholomew County Genealogical Society
PO Box 2455, Columbus, IN 47202-2455

Welcome to Our New Members:

Michele Rodriquez, Jonesboro

Barbara Limeberry, Columbus

Richard Wiley and Stephanie Michael, Columbus

Janet Mathis, Columbus

Stephani D. Steilberg, Columbus



New Books

New Genealogy Books at the Bartholomew County Library

-by Anne e Blount, BC Librarian

The Twenty-Seventh Indiana: Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865; First Division 12th and 20th Corps; A History of Its Recruiting, Organization, Camp Life, Marches and Battles, Together With a Roster of the Men Composing It, and the Names of All Those Killed.

Unknown Author
Ref Ind 973.7472 Bro

Annals of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment Indiana Volunteers, by a Member of the Regiment [A.L. Kerwood].

Kerwood, Asbury L.
Ref Ind 973.7472 Ker

History of the Ninety-Seventh Regiment of Indiana Volunteer Infantry.

Alexander, John D.
Ref Ind 973.7472 Ale

History of the Fifty-eighth Regiment of Indiana Volunteer Infantry: Its Organization, Campaigns and Battles From 1861 to 1865.

Hight, John J.
Ref Ind 973.7472 Hig

American Settlements and Migrations: A Primer for Genealogists and Family Historians.

Bockstruck, Lloyd de Wi
Gen 929.1 Boc

Genetic Genealogy in Practice.

Becker, Blaine
Gen 929.1072 Bet

A Century of Service: The Story of the DAR.

Hunter, Ann Arnold
Gen 369.135 Hun

The Family Tree Historical Atlas of Germany.

Beidler, James M.
Ref Gen 911.43 Bei

Wills Filed Probate Court Hamilton County Ohio 1791 thru 1852.

Ohio Genealogical Society
Ref Gen 929.3771 Wil V. 1

Early Settlers of Harlan County.

Campbell, Donald H.
Ref Gen 929.3769 Cam

Pioneer Families (Revised): Goss, Quakers, Butcher, Allen, McQueen, Love, Neely, Townsend, Collins, Park, Burton, Gorton

McMahan, Delia
Ref Gen 929.2 McM

NEW Bartholomew County Public Library Website

-by Annette Blount, Barth Co Librarian

By the time this is printed the library should have a new website. The address is the same, mybcpl.org, but the look is totally different. We should have access to the same programs and databases but getting to them will be a bit different.

Genealogy has its own page. Heritage Quest and Newspapers.com (Indiana Newspapers) are displayed near the top along with Family Search. We are now an affiliate library with Family Search. That is why it is displayed prominently on the page. As an affiliate library we have access to some records on Family Search that you previously had to go to a Family History Center to view. Now, if you are at home and encounter a record that you need a Family History Center or affiliate library to view, you can come to Bartholomew County Public Library and access Family Search to view that record.

We should have History Geo, Ancestry.com and Newspapers.com (Local Access). They are grouped together in a yellow box. Those are the sites we subscribe to that can be used only in the library.

You can still locate Find a Grave and a local cemetery map by clicking the Cemetery Search button. If you click on County Resources you will find Bartholomew County Genealogical Society and Sandborn Maps.

The newest feature to our genealogy page though is the addition of the high school yearbooks. We have been able to add PDF copies of Columbus High School, Columbus North, Columbus East and Hauser yearbooks. Now you can sit at home in your jammies and view yearbooks on your computer at your own convenience.

I hope you enjoy the new website and continue to utilize the resources provided to you by your library.



Highlights -by Marcus Speer

PROGRAM MINUTES - Jul 27, 2019

On Saturday, July 27, BCGS members and friends enjoyed an outing to the Jackson County History Center of Indiana. A total of thirteen toured the grounds and campus of the History Center. Buildings on the grounds are near the Jackson County Courthouse and include the Ball Museum, the Jackson County Genealogical Library, and the Livery Barn. Inside of the Livery, there were many items and articles for viewing including a wagon and a buggy that were both made in nearby Seymour. Posted near the entrance was the story "The Last Ride." It noted that on May 22, 1868, two years after their first train robbery, Frank Reno and the gang held up a JM & I train in Marshfield, Indiana" In July 1868, they hanged six members of the gang from a beech tree near where the O & m crosses Brownstown Road – now called "Hangman's Crossing."

Passing by a few other historical items on the grounds (Clark and Walters Circus trailer & the WPA wagon), we were led to the Frederick Keach Heller Memorial Museum Building. Touring this building took us in many rooms with displays of historical items including the display of a large collection of arrowheads (found on one Jackson County farm), a display for Clyde L. Gilbert Commercial Artist, and the Kathryn C. Noblitt Memorial Library and Research Center (1998).

On the back side of the grounds there were historical structures and cabins within the John Ketcham Pioneer Village. The first cabin that we viewed in the village was originally located at Brownstown Elementary School. Then, walking past a memorial for the Sons of the American Revolution (In Memory of our Revolutionary Veterans), we made our way to the "Nenstrup Trading Post" and small "fort." The trading post, the first in Jackson County (1827), was erected by Joseph Herman Nenstrup who died in 1843 with no heir. It was then operated by cousin John Henry Nenstrup who died in 1857. It was later purchased and moved twice for use as a barn and was finally relocated and reconstructed in 1990 by the Jackson County Historical Society. From the trading post, one could view the Old Brownstown Cemetery (burials 1816-1890).

Before making our way back to the library, we stopped to view the "Meeting House" cabin, which had many uses. Typically, the Genealogy Library is open: 9am-4pm M, Tu, Th, & F and on Wednesdays and the weekends by appointment. Please, call to verify hours: 812-358-2118. The library includes indexed cemeteries, Lutheran church records, over 1,000 family histories, and many other usefully genealogical resources. After a review of the resources by Bill Day and a group photo by Charlotte Sanders, BCGS members then enjoyed some time investigating all the resources available. Then, before leaving Brownstown, seven members stopped for lunch at the Azteca Mexican Restaurant.

For viewing of photos and additional information please check out the Facebook page for BCGS and the JCHC.

PROGRAM MINUTES - Sep 13-14, 2019

Again, our BCGS September Program coincided with "Steps Through Time" at the Bartholomew County Public Library. This year, BCGS displayed genealogical information about the Library's namesake: Cleo Rogers. A display included the Findagrave memorials for Cleo, her parents, and her fiancé, who preceded her in death. Also, included on the display were photos and a poem (by Shirley Lyster) of Cleo.

As usually, Friday included many students visiting from nearby schools (St. Peter's Lutheran School, CSA Lincoln Elementary School, Columbus Christian School). Students were presented with information about BCGS and family trees (ancestor charts). Materials were



Highlights (cont) -by Marcus Speer

PROGRAM MINUTES - Sep 13-14, 2019 (cont)

shared with students, teachers, and school staff.

On Saturday, mainly adults came to History Days which included passing by our display in the Indiana Room. BCGS volunteer(s) assisted any visitors with genealogical research for their own family history and shared information with them about our Society.

BCGS experienced another successful event during the 2019 History Days: "Steps Through Time." BCGS volunteers this year included: Donna Kuhlman, Karen Loy, Toni Whiteside, and Marcus Speer ... thank you!

PROGRAM MINUTES - Nov 16, 2019

Thirteen Bartholomew County Genealogical Society members and three guests gathered on Saturday, November 16 in the Red Room of the Bartholomew County Library. Our presenter was Erin Doyle of the Jasper Public Library & Corning Irish History Society. Erin's program was entitled: "Building a Solid Case with the GPS Process." For genealogical purposes, GPS stand for "Genealogical Proof Standard." When using this standard, there are six processes to be used by the genealogical researcher.

PROCESS #1: The first process includes conducting a reasonably exhaustive research among a large variety of records.

PROCESS #2: Process # 2 includes determining what "each bit of data represents."

Source: Original, derivative, or authored source

Information: Primary, secondary, or indeterminable information

Evidence: Direct, indirect, or negative evidence

PROCESS #3: With the third process, the researching weighs each piece of data, keeping in mind particularly who furnished the information and why the information/record was created.

PROCESS #4: The fourth process includes thoroughly researching and resolving any evidence that conflicts with or contradicts other evidence.

PROCESS #5: When a researcher reaches the fifth process, he/she considers the case solid when (after negating any contrary evidence), the evidence points in the same direction and no other conclusion can be reached.

PROCESS #6: With the final process (#6) of GPS, the researcher prepares a Proof Argument / Proof Summary that includes an explanation of any opposing or contradictory evidence and how it was resolved.

Erin closed with two important reminders. First, always remember to include citations to all sources. Second, "Common Sense prevails: try not to get bogged down in terms and minutiae and remember that the accuracy of the conclusion is more important.



Tripping My Roots Over

-by Bob Hobbs

THE FAMOUS AND THE INFAMOUS VISITORS

Part 3 *The Infamous Visitor:*

The Time the Murderer Came to Town (cont)

To refresh your memory of Parts 1 and 2, I wrote how in 1965 my family moved to Benton, Illinois and prior to the move we had lived in Centralia, Illinois approximately an hour's drive away. The following includes a brief summary:

THE FAMOUS VISITOR: While living in Centralia, I had listened on my transistor radio to Louise Harrison Caldwell, who reported to a St. Louis radio station on the inside stories and whereabouts of the hit English band The Beatles. While Louise was introduced on the A.M. station as reporting from Benton, Illinois (her home at the time), that bit of information did not resonate with me until we moved there later. It was then that I learned that Louise was not only George Harrison's sister, but that the 20 year-old had visited her in Benton in September of 1963. This was five months before the band in which he played guitar and sang would make its U.S. debut on The Ed Sullivan Show. In fact before his visit, Louise had hitch-hiked to the local radio station and talked them into playing an early Beetle recording, making it the first time a Beetle song had been played on United States airwaves.

THE INFAMOUS VISITOR: In my Illinois History class (a required semester course my junior year at Benton Consolidated High School), I learned of a Depression Era gangster, who with the help of his gang and the rival Shelton Gang, terrorized the towns in area counties, including Franklin, in which Benton was the county seat. Charlie Birger, who became the most infamous of the lot, was born in Russia to Jewish parents and raised in St. Louis before relocating to southern Illinois. He did have a human side in that he provided for the poor and went up against the KKK, but he also murdered or had murdered those who got in the way of his lucrative boot-legging business. It was one of his evil deeds that earned him the distinction of being the last man to be publicly hanged in Illinois. Tried and convicted at the Franklin County Courthouse in the center of the Benton Square of ordering the murder of the mayor of a neighboring town, he spent his last weeks in the county jail a couple of blocks to the west of the courthouse.

I was to also later learn that my paternal grandfather, Troy Hobbs, and the future husband of my maternal grandfather's sister, Bert Smith, had traveled separately from Centralia to be two of 5,000 witnesses of the event.

I now continue the story with Charlie's last short journey from his jail cell on the second floor to the gallows he had watched being assembled just for him:

After climbing the steps, Charlie walked to his assigned spot above the trap door and as reported by several witnesses, "smartly executed a left face." As one of the deputies knelt to strap the prisoner's legs, Phil Hanna stepped forward and asked to be forgiven for the act he would soon perform. Birger shook his hand and



Tripping MY ROOTS Over

-by Bob Hobbs

The Infamous Visitor: The Time the Murderer Came to Town (cont)

replied, "I forgive everybody, thanks to the counseling of the Rabbi." He turned and gave the rabbi a smile and a wink. Moments later, as Hanna pulled tight the straps around his chest and arms, Charlie turned to him and said, "You're a great old boy."

In his blue serge suit, he turned, lifted his head upward as if to take in the blue sky with its tuft of drifting clouds, and said sofly, "It's a beautiful world." Those four words, that one line heard by only a few, would make the front pages and be repeated in both the sermons of Sunday church services and on the corners of community streets.

Prior to putting the black hood Charlie had selected over his head because he didn't want to be mistaken for a member of the KKK by choosing the white one, Hanna was careful to keep the noose's rope behind his back. It was something he always did, out of respect to its soon-to-be recipient.

As the clock ticked to the appointed time of 10:00 A.M. on April 19, 1928, Sheriff Flannigan noticed the "withering death stare/half grin" that was directed at Jim Pritchard. The sheriff had played an instrumental role in Charlie's capture and had served as his host in the Franklin County Jail and his personal escort to and from the county courthouse during his trial. Pritchard's was the last face Charlie would see as the hood was lowered over his head.

Charlie asked that they "hurry up" and his request was soon granted. According to Harrisburg, Illinois resident Alpheus Gusti, Charlie's wish came to pass at 9:48. From his perch atop a nearby building, Willard St. John, the state's attorney, saw the rope "spin like a top" after the trap was sprung. Five minutes later, Charlie Birger was pronounced dead by the attending doctors. His body was carried to the hearse in the wicker basket Charlie had noted before going up the scaffolding steps.

Birger's last trip to his childhood home of St. Louis did not immediately proceed as his body was first taken to a local Benton "undertaking parlor." The hearse did double duty and was sent out to pick up an elderly woman who had been knocked down by a barn door on that windy morning. The delay gave Deputy Boswell, who had accompanied the still-warm body, the opportunity to inspect the corpse in the wicker basket



Charlie Birger flashes a smile as the deputy kneels to strap his legs together. Phil Hanna holds the noose.



Tripping MY ROOTS Over

-by Bob Hobbs

The Infamous Visitor: The Time the Murderer Came to Town (cont)

more closely. Boswell later reported “the neck was visibly stretched.” The tell-tale depression on the side of the neck where the knot had come into contact was proof that Phil Hanna, the professional executioner, had done his usual good job. “No question about it, his neck was broken,” Boswell had declared later.

With a police escort maintaining a speed of approximately 40 miles per hour, the hearse made the journey west to St. Louis. Reaching the suburb of University City on the southwest side just before 4:00 P.M., the entourage reached the Chesed Shel Emeth Cemetery where about seventy-five friends and relatives had gathered. With no rabbi present, Samuel, one of Charlie’s brothers, read a Hebrew prayer for the dead. One reporter present wrote that he was still not satisfied that Charlie Birger had paid in full for the chaos he had brought to a region that was already known nationwide for its lawlessness. On the other hand, Elva Jones of the *Marion Evening Post*, tried to recall the good in the man who had despised the KKK, looked out for the poor, the immigrants, the miners. and had reminded many “of the western heroes of the movies.”

No one could deny that, according to author Gary DeNeal, “In southern Illinois, Charlie Birger had loved and entertained and murdered and died—all in a dramatic fashion.”

The Presence of George Harrison and Charlie Birger in Present-Day Benton, Illinois

If you should ever find yourself traveling south on I-57 south in southern Illinois where I-64 intersects it going east and west, I recommend you take a break from your driving and get off at the Benton exit #71. It will be a well-spent.

A short distance north of the Benton exit, you will see a sign calling attention to Benton’s Beetle connection with George Harrison.

After Louise and her husband moved out of the house located at 113 McCann Street in which George had spent several nights, it eventually became the Hard Day’s Night Bed and



The 16 foot tall “highway art” completed in 2017 commemorating Benton’s history with Beetle member George Harrison



Tripping MY ROOTS Over

-by Bob Hobbs

The Presence of George Harrison and Charlie Birger in Present-Day Benton, Illinois (cont)

Breakfast. Unfortunately this enterprise was short-lived and the house was demolished amid many unsuccessful protests.

At the red light at the end of the on ramp, to your right is West City, where Mayor Joe Adams met his demise thanks to two members of Charlie Birger's gang. However, you'll want to turn left and a couple of stop lights later on West Main Street, you'll see on your left the Franklin County Jail that was Charlie's last home and the place of his hanging. It is now a museum that houses memorabilia of George's visit to the town in 1963, Charlie's visit to the jail facilities, and other items of interest germane to Benton and Franklin County. Outside to the east side of the building you'll find a reconstruction of the scaffolding complete with its noose. The originals are inside the museum, including the actual scaffolding having been found a few years of seeking it in a local farmer's barn.

The museum also houses information and items of interest in regards to Doug Collins (Class of '69), the NBA coach, player, broadcaster, and Olympic basketball player, and his next-door neighbor Academy Award-winning actor John Malkovich (Class of '71), both with which I went to high school.

If you have a few extra minutes, after your perusal of the museum, head further east and circle the Benton Square where you'll see the unfortunately soon to be razed county courthouse where Charlie stood trial. Built in 1874-75 at a cost of \$27,500, a decision was made recently that it was not financially responsible to try to save it. Instead a new, more functional structure will be built in the style of a modern version of the original's Italianate architecture.

To keep Charlie's Birger's historical legacy alive, my fellow high school classmate Robert Rea (Class of '70) portrays him, complete in his dapper 1920s style of dressing. He delivers an autobiographical monologue in an imitation of Charlie's voice to local schools and civic organizations. I applaud Bob, the third generation owner of an independent insurance agency founded by his grandfather, for leading the efforts of keeping the history of Franklin County accessible for generations to come.



A photo I took on a visit to Benton on 9/15/2019 of the scaffolding and the noose framed by the fence that now encloses it. Charlie's cell windows are in the background

Bartholomew County Genealogical Society

Membership year extends from Jan – Dec (includes 4 issues of ANCESTORS)

1 year Membership: Individual (\$10) Couple (\$15)

Contact us ! Like us on facebook !

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Thanks for your Support

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