# AMES FREE LIBRARY GENEALOGY CLUB

## Who We Are

The Ames Free Library Genealogy Club is a group dedicated to helping each other with genealogical research. The group is free and open to all who have an interest in family history. We meet monthly to use the library's free access to ancestry.com. Research help and access to the New England Historic Genealogical Society databases will be provided by local historian Ed Hands. Now in our third season, the group is adding this monthly newsletter and other features during the year.

## Meeting Dates

**January 14, 2017**

**February 11, 2017**

**March 11, 2017**

**April 8, 2017**

**May 13, 2017**

**June 10, 2017**

**Queset House 2:30-4:30**

## January Meeting

Hi, welcome to the fifth edition of the Genealogical Club Newsletter. **We will be meeting this Saturday, January 14, 2017 at Queset House.** Please talk up the group to your friends, and if you have any suggestion for changes or additions to our meetings, please let me know.

## After the Gold Rush

What do you do after you've added a ton of gold to your family tree? You know, when the leaves at Ancestry keep popping up, and you indiscriminately add bits and pieces? I thought my goal-to add all ancestors up to each immigrant was finally complete leaving me ready to push on overseas, but Crista Cowan from ancestry.com has produced a couple of YouTube videos about cleaning up your family tree that has brought me up short with some great ideas.

The biggest idea is that the computer at Ancestry handles about 75 million inquiries every day and that its search algorithm is spectacularly dumber than we ever imagined. Take dates, for example. You can enter dates into ancestry in a number of ways "June 1, 1817" or "6-1-1817," but it really, really wants you to enter dates as day (with double digits), three letter month, and full year-01 Jun 1817. Why do it that way?

## New In Ancestry

The most interesting collections of data loaded into Ancestry over the last two months are vital records imported from Family Search. You can access specific state records by going to Ancestry's card catalog. Take Maine for example, if you sort card catalog results by date added and use Maine as the collection title. A search box will pop up with the title "Maine, Marriage Index, 1670-1921" along the right hand side you'll discover two other older databases for Maine marriages, birth and death records, and wills and probates.

Scrolling to the bottom of the page tells you that the collection may give you name, age at marriage. date and place of marriage, and parents names for both parties although my trial search didn't bring up that much information.

Very detailed information about each new collection can be found through a link to Family Search.

I'd also like to remind you that Ancestry has a very robust channel on YouTube with dozens of help videos. There are lots of genealogy or DNA YouTube videos, but it's nice that Ancestry has really made it easy to learn genealogy through the most used genealogy website on earth. It's also great we can research Ancestry for free through the Ames Free Library.

For two reasons, first, it is the correct format for professional genealogists because it helps prevent a mistake like 1-6-1817-is it January 6th or June 1st? Even more important only the correct format engages Ancestry's search algorithm. If you go back and "correct" your dates more leafs almost certainly will pop up.

Correcting any dates that may have snuck into your family tree is easier than you might imagine. Just open a profile click on quick edit and click in a date box. At that point Ancestry pops up a box with the date in the correct form.

Crista also recommends doing a more extensive clean up if you have your Ancestry account synced to Family Tree Maker on your computer. The online version of Ancestry is designed to be rock solid for 75 million queries a day so in order to work without bugs it has fewer fix-it features than Family Tree Maker.

An easy fix is to run a check on place names in Family Tree Maker. You'd be surprised how you might misspell a common place name like Barnstable in Massachusetts and Barnstaple in England. Also, just like dates, there is a preferred format for places-town, county, country which can be fixed in this search. You have to be careful because the search algorithm is picky. Ballymoney in Antrim, Ireland shows up as a wrong answer with the suggestion that its Ballymoney, Donegal. The problem is (besides another Ballymoney in Cork) that my Ballymoney is in NORTHERN Ireland.

Finally, Family Tree Maker has a rich suite of searches for things like missing dates for births, deaths, and marriages. That's a helpful and not embarrassing search. You can also search for the stupid genealogist errors like children born a year after their father is dead, people over 120, marriages and pregnancies before the age of 13, etc. All things that a careful non-gold rushing genealogists should avoid. That particular error report yielded me 21 pages of stupid errors that will take me months to fix!

And then there are all those new leaves to check out.

**new**