

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

April 8, 2017

May 13, 2017

June 10, 2017

Queset House 2:30-4:30

April Meeting

The April Meeting of the Ames Free Library Genealogy Club will take place this Saturday, April 8 at Queset House from 2:30-4:30.

TLC's "Who Do You Think You Are?"

The TLC networks genealogy show is about halfway through its latest season. It's available on demand if you want to catch up on the four episodes that have already aired. It's fun to watch celebrities get started in the hobby we all love. All four shows have been interesting. Jennifer Grey found out about the immigrant grandfather she never really understood. Julie Bowen and Jessica Biel found out that old family stories about the Civil War were true, and Courteney Cox discovered a royal pedigree.

Having Trouble with Ancestry DNA?

We had a very small turnout at last month's meeting, but that led to a long discussion of alternatives to Ancestry's DNA testing. Almost as if they could hear us, Ancestry is in the process of upgrading the information for those who have taken their test. In the short run this has led to a lot of service interruptions as the site is revised. Checking in last night, there were still parts of Ancestry DNA that I could not access. Hopefully, the upgrade will be worth the wait.



What's New at

Ancestry Record Indexes

In January Crista Cowan posted a video on YouTube called "Understanding Ancestry Record Indexes." An index gives you enough info to tell if the actual record might be about your ancestor. Since ancestry takes in millions of records a month in different formats, indexes are the way they make things accessible to us while they work on making the actual records available. This video will help a lot in using indexes.

Indexes are created in three ways. For written documents Ancestry either uses paid professional indexers or volunteers. As people they can make mistakes like the indexer who labelled a whole bunch of Easton entries as coming from Easthampton, Typed and printed records are being indexed by computers, and while very good at their job they are not perfect either.

When you use and index look at the little picture on the left. If it shows a picture of a document, you can connect to that document. Ancestry's census indexes work this way. On the other hand if you see an "index only" note you may be stuck with just the index. The Social Security Death Index works this way giving you a name and a date of death and not much else.

Except for major databases, Ancestry indexers are going back and adding information. For the SS Death Index make sure to click on ALL names that appear in blue-that's a possible link to additional information.

The Holy Grail of Easton Genealogy

Reverend William Chaffin in his **History of Easton** promised another book called "The Genealogical History of Easton," but he never completed it. Chaffin was an excellent genealogist completing a fine book on the Randall family. He wrote to people all over the country seeking information and part of this correspondence has come down to us. Chaffin also had access to the early town records on births, deaths, and marriages, and may, in fact, have compiled those records in the form we have today. Why didn't he complete his genealogical history? First, Yankees like to name their kids after close relatives complicating sorting them out in the records. Second, by Chaffin's time waves of Irish and Swedish immigrants had added large numbers of new families to study, Finally, Chaffin did not have easy access to data like censuses so there was a technological barrier he couldn't surmount.

We owe a lot to a member of the Buck Family who has transcribed the town's early vital records that I mentioned above and put them on the internet. That site also includes transcriptions of the family head censuses of 1790, 1800, and 1810, and the first two censuses with all family members named from 1850 and 1855. In the vital records, family entries are scattered throughout the 300+ pages, but the Buck transcriber provided an index for each family that has proven very reliable. I've been compiling all the scattered entries into their original families for some time. Nearly finished with that task I suddenly realized that I could do a genealogical history of families rather than individuals by linking family entries with something called hyperlinks. These are instructions in computer language to link two entries together and jump from one to another. This magic is how websites work, but iBook Author also allows hyperlinks. I decided to do a proof of concept with the letter A. Here's how it works: old Oliver Ames' family is included in the vital records of Easton even though Oliver, Jr. was actually born in Plymouth. Three of Oliver's sons raised families in Easton so each of the four families have an entry, and you can jump to the son's pages from old Oliver's. Including only families in the original vital records may give us connections to about 1843 where we can then update the families with the 1850 and 1855 censuses. That would give us at least the skeleton of a town genealogy for a period of 150 years. In theory this could be extended with later census records at Ancestry and even add tax and other records.