

Genealogy
Club of
Montgomery
County IN
Corporation

Join us for a
journey
through
history and
time.
An Odyssey
for those
beginning or
experienced
in genealogy.

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Roots and Branches

Volume 15—Issue 2

February 2018

"Encouraging Young People"



Since 2013, one of the Genealogy Club of Montgomery County's purpose has been to encourage young people to become interested in genealogy by promoting the resources available locally, aiding in ancestry searches, and helping teach the proper documentation of sources through the local 4H program. Our very own, Linda Templin, has a real heart for this mission. From the beginning, Linda has been an active mentor during our After Hours Programs with local 4Hers. Linda has recently taken this passion a step further,

developing a systematic program to help the kids to succeed in their project. She is shown here, preparing the resources for the folders supplied to each child involved in our 4H After Hours Programs. Four scheduled After Hours programs provide opportunities for the kids to enhance their skills (and hopefully whet their appetites). Linda and others are ready to help. Dates for the programs are scheduled for February 23, March 23, May 25 and June 22, 2018. Feel free to join us—need more information: contact Dellie at CDPL 765-362-2242 or email delliejean@yahoo.com

Feel free to find us and Like us on FACEBOOK!

<https://www.facebook.com/Genealogy-Club-of-Montgomery-County-Indiana-Corp-1814527675437018/>

The Family Bible Project is available on the Crawfordsville District Public Library web site at: <http://history.cdpl.lib.in.us/bibles.html> The Bibles have been transcribed and scanned and are searchable by family name. As of May 2017, there were 135 Bibles online with more being added every month thanks to an IGS grant and club volunteers.



Steve Sims

Summarized Secretary's Report By Steve Sims, Secretary

The Genealogy Club of Montgomery County, Indiana, continues to meet the second Tuesday of every month at Crawfordsville District Public Library at 7pm. Visitors and new members are welcome to all meetings.

In November, we had a Veteran's Roundtable, where several of our Veteran's discussed their time in the service.



In December, Larry Truitt, Indiana Pioneer Cemeteries Restoration Project Coordinator for Boone County, Indiana, spoke on the "Colored Cemetery" that is located in Boone County.

In January, Karen Zach, shared her research during her presentation "Down on the Farm: The Story of Montgomery County's Poor Asylum". She gave real life examples of people who lived at the farm from 1844—late 1970's.



Karen Bazzani Zach



Stephanie Simms and Judi Kleine

Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

Stephanie Simms has agreed to learn how to work on our club newsletter! Judi has been working on it alone for the last 4-1/2 years and is welcoming any help she can get. Stephanie will be a great asset to our publication. Thank you Stephanie!

One Fine Family: Willis



**Karen
Bazzani
Zach**

Editor's Note: This is the another installment in the new series highlighting notable Montgomery County Families written by Karen Bazzani Zach. This article was first featured on the INGenWeb site for Montgomery County that is populated thanks in big part to Karen's efforts. Thank you, Karen for your love of genealogy and efforts to preserve our history.

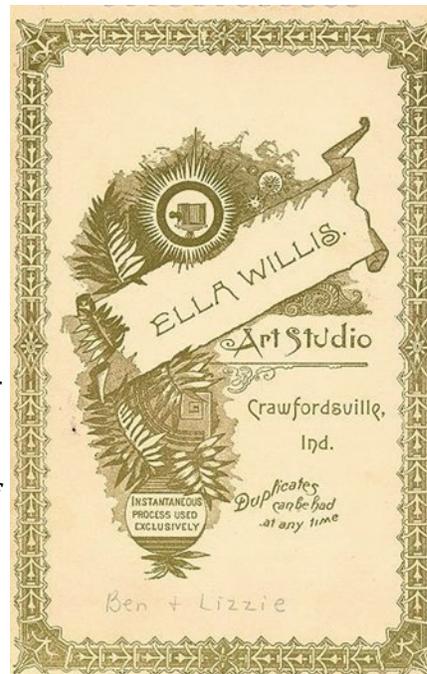
You can find this and other interesting information about Montgomery County at: The INGenWeb Project, Copyright ©1997-2018 (and beyond), Montgomery County GenWeb site <http://www.ingenweb.org/inmontgomery/>

Luck! Yep, luck. There's good luck. Bad luck, and the latter is mostly what the WILLIS family of Montgomery County tallied. The family began with Benjamin and Susanna BUTTS WILLIS, who were early settlers in the Alamo area. His father, too, was Benjamin who came to Indiana in the early 1820s but died not long after and was buried near his favorite tree on the farm he was able to extract from the government, it is assumed for military purposes, but that is unknown.

His son, Abner Denman WILLIS, had heard about the great soil in the Alamo area and headed that way upon his marriage to Frances Ella COMEGYS. Nine children were born to this couple, eight growing to adulthood. The males had impressive names: Stephen Decatur; Abner Denman; John Wesley; Benjamin Franklin and Joseph Martin; the gals Julia Ann, Amanda Jane, and Sarah Elizabeth. This family was devastated at the loss of their mother in 1860, when some of these children were yet fairly small.

Abner did an apprenticeship with a tinner in Crawfordsville. Completing that, he attended the Quaker Academy at Bloomingdale. Teaching school for a year, in Vermillion County, he met Frances Ellen COMEGY, a pupil there to whom he married in late September 1864 near Danville, Illinois. Along with the tinnerness, he naturally went into the daguerreotype making of the tin-type pictures, and opened the Willis Photograph Gallery which he operated for a dozen years (1866-1878), then for an unknown reason, moved to Harrisonville, Missouri. He had a photography gallery there, as well. After moving back to Crawfordsville, he continued the Willis Photograph Gallery business. He was working in photography when he died of pneumonia while on a business trip back to Harrisonville, seeming to always have ties back in Missouri.

Few citizens in the county did not know of A.D. WILLIS, either by his profession or via his widely stated and just as well-known political viewpoints, being a staunch Democrat. A widely read self-made man, he was a member of the Christian Church and a devout Mason. Always delving into various philosophies, he particularly believed in the Swedenborg Movement, a spiritualistic viewpoint of the scriptures. Swedenborg wrote volumes that WILLIS read and re-read. Swedenborg believed that he could be in the spiritual as well as the worldly world. Seems at least a couple of the WILLIS children believed the same.



Stories and questions prevail regarding this family. For instance, at age 28, Mary Ellen WILLIS, daughter of Lewis (also found as Lucious which is more intriguing) COMEGY WILLIS, spent a great deal of effort to go to Cuba, commenting as to the purpose of the trip was for health reasons. A tiny thing, she stood a mere 4'2 ½", (see picture below) but evidently her stamina was non-stop or the trip presented miracles, as she did not pass away until she was 83, still single. Perhaps she was chasing a 'Cuban fella' and her heart was broken, thus she returned to never marry. Okay, it's the Creative Writing juices flowing, I guess. By the way, she spent her life as a bookkeeper.



Many lower Montgomery and Fountain names intertwine with this family: FARLEY; FRANCIS; HAM; HANCOCK; KELLER; LESLIE; LINDSEY; WHITAKER; WHITLEY; RIVERS; and WOOD. It is assumed these marriages were happy, several lasting for 40 or more years, and most ending because of a death.

Grocers, farmers, druggists were some of the occupations - not only men but women too were long-time photographers, some of the nicest early pictures from Montgomery County came from the various Willis studios. Speaking of the picture takers, the Willis group, for their time, were extraordinary in the whole process. Even the back of their pictures were entertaining, especially when Abner's wife, Ella, was photographing. Others just took a baby's picture but these folks dressed one up in major style, highlighting it with feathers and things. Love it!

Abner, mentioned above, actually started his career as a photographer with a travelling show, per se. He packed-up his equipment, visited a small town and shot away. This lasted but a couple of years, however. Although Abner was back and forth a bit in his career choice, even heading west, travelling to and from Missouri, where he actually passed away, it was his wife (Francis) Ella COMEGY WILLIS who seemed to really make their photography business unique. It is highly likely that A.D. worked in Missouri, while his Mrs. worked here as one article in an 1896 newspaper stated, "Mrs. WILLIS has made pictures for people of this county for 20 years. Her gallery was on Main Street south of the courthouse. Yet another source says that this lady's name was Lew (Lou) which is not Mrs. A.D. (Frances "Ella" COMEGY unless her name was Frances Luella). There aren't many other of the wives who could have been the right age to have been taking pictures in 1876, so I am assuming this is Ella COMEGY WILLIS.

Of the about 70 photographers in the county I have researched for the GenWeb page, the WILLIS group probably has the most names for basically the same firm. You see (previous page) the Ella WILLIS Art Studio; WILLIS & MCQUOWAN; plus others were A.D. WILLIS' Fine Art Gallery; The WILLIS Gallery; WILLIS Studio; A.D. WILLIS with an old fashioned camera; Parker WILLIS; Mrs. WILLIS & Sons; WILLIS, Crawfordsville; WILLIS Photograph Gallery and there may be more. Just as a side note, I've never really been able to pinpoint who the MCQUOWAN was. Seems to only be two; James (who was a gardener and Henry, who is found as a railroad laborer in various census records) so one of them, likely Henry may have delved off and on in the gallery business, perhaps of an evening or weekends as many do today with more than one job. There is also (at least in 1907 when it is known one picture is taken) a MCQUOWN-WILTON studio, assumedly this MCQUOWN, bit of a different spelling, but obviously the same name.



One Fine Family: WILLIS (continued)

So, more stories. The Parker WILLIS mentioned before was the oldest of the children of Abner and Frances COMEGY WILLIS, born in Crawfordsville August 21, 1868. As you see above, he worked with his mother as well as having his own studio and is said to have been the best of the best in the field, even taking his pictures to contests all over the country and ... winning! In his life, he also became famous having purported to have found a cure (in a bottle which he sold all over the world and became quite rich) for alcoholism. He married Hattie BELL in Indianapolis (where they lived for a few years) and they produced a lovely daughter, Mary Frances, named for his beloved mother. Although I read for hours about this couple, nowhere did I find exactly what the marital problems were, but they were divorced and she closely followed with a marriage to W.Y. ELLIS, a fine man who loved her dearly and who would literally do anything to please her (including travelling quite a bit, just ahead of her ex-husband).

Things got ugly when the ELLIS' moved with Mary Frances to Arkansas where ELLIS' family lived. Parker fought tooth and nail for custody of the child. Finally, he won a 10-day custody suit and was in the courtroom to sign papers and get the child. He was to stay in the same town and he was elated just to get to see her. His mother was with him and all seemed well, except ELLIS in stead of Hattie, only heard the part that Parker got custody and he knew that would kill her mother. He whipped out a gun, shot over Parker's lawyer, Senator Jeff DAVIS, and missed, landing the bullet in the wall. Parker ran but ELLIS was hot in pursuit, shooting again and this time the bullet made its mark. Parker died in his mother's arms shortly thereafter. ELLIS received only a three-year-prison sentence due to having a mental breakdown (I'd have believed that one if he shot once) and within just a couple of weeks friends and his church members supposedly had almost 10,000 signatures to get him out of prison, period. The judge didn't fall for that so it is assumed by this writer that he carried out his 3-year-sentence, which seemed rather short for a murder. Parker has a beautiful stone in Oak Hill Cemetery with a picture of he and his child (or at least a representation of them) and a touching verse about laying down your love for someone you love – John 15:13. At ELLIS' trial, they read letters to Mary Frances from Parker, powerful, loving letters. No doubt there was great love for his one child.

Now, on to the last of the stories although be aware there are many more I could tell. Parker's first cousin, Joseph Martin WILLIS, was also a manufacturer of "medicine," his specialty being a suicide medicine he sold. There were many items upon his death written in the newspapers, even down to the people being mad that there was no music by the Crawfordsville band that J.M. WILLIS had requested in a letter outlying his funeral. The huge oblique memorial (picture by Dustin STONEBRAKER, thanks muches, buddy – saved me a trip to Alamo – kbz) was also requested in his funeral directions. However, the lawyer thought the extra expense of getting the band members to Alamo was too much for the estate. So, obviously, suicide had been an interest of J.M. WILLIS, and that's exactly what got him in the end. Looking into the mirror, who only knows why, he shot himself and that was his doom at age 55. Almost all the men in the WILLIS family died young, obviously, some by their own doing, others tragically and a few of natural causes. The tales continue regarding this interesting family, but for now, hope you enjoyed this Family Focus !!





Dellie Craig,
Local History
Assistant

Expanding our Collection and Making Connections

Update on progress of Plat Map Project

No more books are available from the bindery yet, but all the townships are online at the link below with PDF and indexes within. These cover all but Wayne Township. You can view or download the PDF onto your computer. We have more than 125 books so far. When I am all done later will have an index for all together. In the meantime, in front of each book is an index. So remember with most townships, they have 12—13 books. You can also trace the property ownership if you know the Township, Range, and Section. [Montgomery County Plat Maps](http://www.cdpl.lib.in.us/services/reference/montgomery-county-plat-maps) <http://www.cdpl.lib.in.us/services/reference/montgomery-county-plat-maps>

Jim BROTHERS from the Geist Christian Church in Indianapolis called ahead to meet with me pertaining to William BRATTON (of the LEWIS & CLARK Expedition — who is buried in the Waynetown Pioneer Cemetery in Waynetown, Montgomery County, Indiana to view the related information in our collection. He was going to bring the church study group with him but he ended up coming on 31 October 2017 with one due to poor weather. He brought Charles MILLER with him. They loved what we had and plan to bring another group later this year to spend several hours looing through all the articles, etc.



We recently had visitors at CDPL who wanted to learn more about their RONK family from Montgomery County, IN. I showed them how to use our resources, the microfilm, and databases. We have some genealogy databases that are accessible through CDPL only in the library.

L to R: Hope RABIDEAU, Sharon LAND, and Sheryl Jo ANDREWS

From Family Tree Magazine How to Edit and Digitize Old Photos

Great tips on ways to digitize and save old family photographs. You can view on the [Family Tree Magazine website](https://www.familytreemagazine.com/articles/news-blogs/family-tree-university/edit-digitize-old-photos/), no subscription required: <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/articles/news-blogs/family-tree-university/edit-digitize-old-photos/>



Tina BANICKI and I taken on 21 November 2017

Tina and her husband came from out of state to research their TRACY family. They planned on coming in 2009 but that did not happen. Tina is a distant cousin of my husband, Roger CRAIG through his Jesse TRACY family in Montgomery County, IN near Wingate. They originally came from Fleming County, Kentucky.

On 2 December 2017, Laura LIDESTER TYRA and Sandy LIDSTER (who come to the library every 3-4 months) met pertaining to their LIDESTER ancestors. Sandy does not live in state but Laura lives near Linden, IN. They are able to help each other from different sources.



I was lucky to have my cousins, Tommy Lee DAY and wife Mary THOMA come from Danville, IL to hand carry an obituary for my 3X Great Grandma. Very special delivery and I even got a hug. Plus, I was able to borrow old family photos and articles. I gave them tour of the CDPL and showed them how to use our databases and microfilms.

Who says you can't have fun with technology?
I have never seen the microfilm do this before.

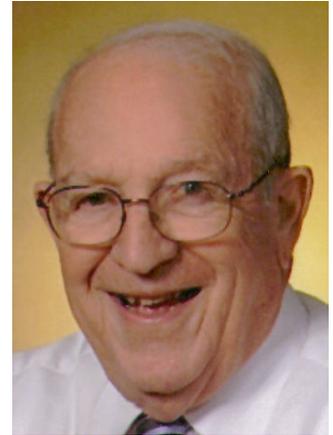


Local News and Notes

Robert A. “Bob” Smith

Robert A. “Bob” SMITH, Crawfordsville, died Tuesday, November 7, 2017 at Kesslerwood Place in Indianapolis after a long illness. He was 95.

He was born Oct. 9, 1922, to Charles V. SMITH and Eliss (VARADY) SMITH, at the first Culver Union Hospital in Crawfordsville. His grandfather, A.M. SMITH, was the owner and publisher of the Crawfordsville Journal, later the Crawfordsville Journal and Review.



Mr. SMITH graduated from Crawfordsville High School in 1940 and began studies at Purdue University in Pharmacy. Those studies were interrupted by World War II, where Mr. SMITH served for 37 months in the Army, primarily in the 11th Armored Division B Battery 492nd Field Artillery Battalion. He served in the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of Mauthausen Concentration Camp.

After the war, Mr. SMITH returned to Purdue and finished his studies in Pharmacy, graduating in 1947.

He married Betty Lou BRUICK in 1947 and had one daughter, Marilee, born in 1948. Mr. SMITH is also survived by two grandsons, Edward and William UPDIKE; one great-granddaughter, Meagan PHILLIPS; and two great-grandsons, William and Lucas UPDIKE.

Mr. SMITH was a long-time member of the First Christian Church, Crawfordsville Kiwanis Club, VFW, and the American Legion. He also took great pride in working with the Crawfordsville Habitat for Humanity for many years, helping to provide homes to those who needed them.

Services for Mr. SMITH were November 10, 2017.

Our condolences to the Bob Smith Family.

The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front of him,
but because he loves what is behind him.

~G.K. Chesterton

Upcoming events

February 13, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting at Bethel AME Church, 213 W North St, Crawfordsville
 “A Tale of Two Churches” by Vicke Switzer— Refreshments: Stephanie Simms and Judi Kleine

February 23, 2018—5-9pm

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

March 13, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting at CDPL
 “Linden Depot Museum Railroad History” by Elizabeth Henderson—
 Refreshments: Linda Templin

March 23, 2018—5-9pm

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

April 10, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting at CDPL
 “Germanna 101: Virginia to Montgomery County, Indiana” by Fred Smith—
 Refreshments: Sam and Ruth Evans

April 27, 2018—5-9pm

After Hours Program at CDPL

May 8, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting

May 25, 2018—5-9pm

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

June 12, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting—Refreshments:
 Lynn Scharf and Judy Harvey

June 22, 2018—5-9pm

4H After Hours Program at CDPL

July 10, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting

July 27, 2018—5-9pm

After Hours Program at CDPL

August 14, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting

September 11, 2018—6pm

Genealogy Club Annual Dinner Meeting

October 9, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting—Refreshments:
 Mary Cramer and Eva Legg

October 26, 2018—5-9pm

After Hours Program at CDPL

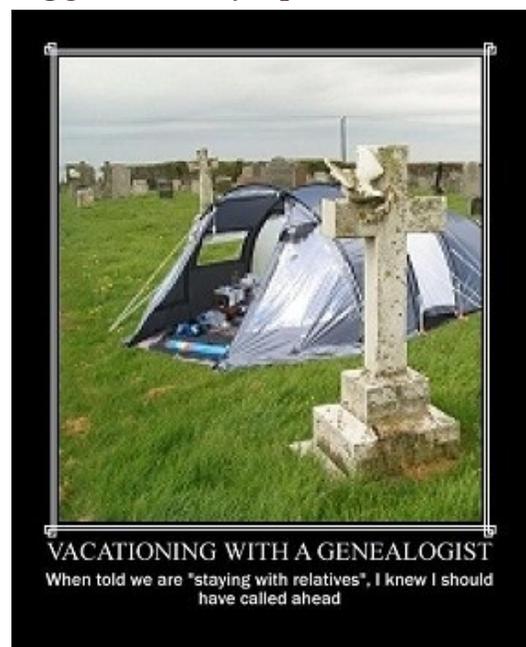
November 13, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting

December 11, 2018—7pm

Genealogy Club Meeting—Refreshments:
 Everyone

All articles and other submissions for the May newsletter must be emailed to judikleine@gmail.com by April 27, 2018



VACATIONING WITH A GENEALOGIST
 When told we are "staying with relatives", I knew I should
 have called ahead

**GENEALOGY
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Find additional
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history.blogspot.com](http://cdpl-history.blogspot.com)

Join us for a journey through history and time



The annual dues of the Genealogy Club of Montgomery County Indiana Inc. for the period October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018 are due in September 2017.

They may be given to Dellie Craig at the Crawfordsville District Public Library or mailed to the Club Treasurer (John Hooper, 1576 E 400 N, Crawfordsville, IN 47933).

You can find current and past Genealogy club newsletters and a membership application on the Crawfordsville District Public Library Website www.cdpl.lib.in.us Find us under the services tab and click on Genealogy Club of Montgomery County

**GENEALOGY CLUB OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY CORP
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Date _____ New
 Renewal

Individual Family Institutional Business
 \$10/yr \$25/yr \$15/yr \$50/yr

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Check if it is acceptable to email you a pdf copy of the newsletter

Family/Families you are researching:

Mail application and payment to: Genealogy Club of Montgomery County Indiana Corp., 205 S. Washington St., Crawfordsville, IN 47933