



# Family Footprints

Family · History · It's All Relative

Vol. 53, No. 1

First Quarter – January, February, March

Winter 2026

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### Website:

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

### Email:

[ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com)

### Columbine Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc

PO Box 2074  
Centennial, CO 80161-2074

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## Our 53<sup>rd</sup> Year!

Established 1973  
Cultural & Educational Organization 501(c) (3)  
Newsletter Published Quarterly  
Subscription included in membership dues

### Member of



## COLD CASE #2013: THE CASE OF THE STOLEN HEADSTONES

By Nan Reubert

In summer 2013 two of my cousins, sisters Franny and Paula, decided they would host a weekend family reunion. To my knowledge the Fidance clan (originally Fidanza back in Italy) had not held a family reunion since my Great Aunt Rose hosted them annually through the 1940s and into the 1950s. How exciting!

My Italian-American cousins grew up, and most still lived, in Wilmington, Delaware, a smallish city with a large Italian-American population. Mom, Catherine nee Fidance, grew up there too, but she had married outside the Italian Catholic community and my brothers and I grew up a hundred miles away in northern New Jersey though spending plenty of time as kids visiting our Wilmington family. Now my little branch of the family lives 2,000 miles away in Colorado, Mom having moved here in 1971, and my two brothers and I all have families of our own in Colorado.

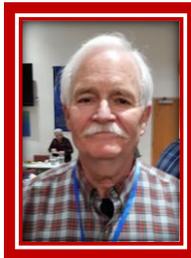
By 2013 I hadn't been back to Wilmington to see family in about 17 years. A long time. So OF COURSE I was going to go to the reunion, and bring my husband Tex and my 34-year-old daughter Kitty too. I was eager to see my many cousins again and catch up on their lives, and to have my daughter get to know her Italian-American relations. Kitty, of course, had met them as a child and as a young teen. But she was now an adult who hadn't seen these folks in more than half her lifetime.

While there, we were going to make the obligatory visit to Silverbrook Cemetery, where my Fidance grandparents, my Aunt Marge and my mom are buried in

*Continued on page 12*

## THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Sean McGuire



Do you know what keeps me up at night? I worry too much. One of the things I worry about is Columbine Genealogy. In November, we had our Annual Meeting, in which the membership is asked to vote on prospective Board members, changes to the Bylaws and Standing Rules, and the upcoming budget.

We had a nominee for Education Coordinator, but she withdrew after considering how much work that might entail. She did offer to act as a co-coordinator, but only if someone else volunteered to help shoulder the burden. Nobody stepped up.

What does that mean for Columbine? In recent years, we have offered a Program Meeting on the second Tuesday of each month, and an Education Program (or “Skills Session”) on the third Tuesday of each month. We do not hold these meetings during the summer months. We have also had a robust series of Special Interest Groups, which are coordinated to some degree by the Education Coordinator.

So far, we have Skills Sessions scheduled for January and February of 2026. But we need someone to step up and act as a Coordinator or Co-coordinator. What if nobody volunteers? Should we stop offering these programs? This is a difficult decision that your Board may have to make soon. Even if we don’t continue the Education function, we still need to fill the Board.

Two years ago, we asked the membership to approve reducing the number of Directors on the Board from nine to seven people. One of the primary reasons we did so was that we had trouble getting a quorum of Directors to meet every month. If we don’t have a quorum, our rules are simple: we cannot make decisions!

I am reminded of the recent failure of the Broomfield Genealogy Society. They are closing shop at the end of 2025. Why? Because they cannot get people to volunteer.

I am pleading for someone to step up and volunteer to be an Education Coordinator or Co-coordinator. This is a Board position, and requires that the candidate be a Columbine member for at least one year. As a Board member, you need to attend the Board meetings, which occur via Zoom on the Second Tuesday of nine different months at 9:00 a.m. (The Board does not meet in December, June, and July.) Board meetings last for two hours, then we reconvene later that day for our Program Meeting. The Education

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### OFFICERS – 2025

##### President

Sean McGuire

##### Vice President – Programs

Marylee Hagen

##### Secretary

Stephen Asay

##### Treasurer

Sharol Bettencourt

##### Education Coordinators

Barbara Elliott + Open Position

##### Membership Coordinators

Jean Adams, Susan Hollis,  
Maggie Schmidt, Gary Witt

##### Publicity

Ann Kerr + Open Position

### APPOINTED STANDING COMMITTEES

#### Acquisitions

Donna Chrislip

#### Auditing

Open Positions

#### Bylaws & Standing Rules

Barbara Elliott

#### Colorado Council Representative

Nancy Berendt

#### Equipment

Neil Johnson

#### Hospitality Co-Chairs

Alicia Smart + Open Position

#### Newsletter Editor

Jeanie Blanchard

#### Newsletter Proofreader

CJ Backus

#### Nominating Co-Chairs

Open Positions

#### Photographer

Open Position

#### Social Media Editor

Ann Kerr

#### Website Editor & Assistant

Nancy Reubert, Neil Johnson

#### Calendar & Email Manager

Pam Rosendal

#### Zoom Committee

Becky Clark, Richard Evans, Neil Johnson,  
Sean McGuire, Maggie Schmidt



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Coordinator need not be a Colorado resident, as all of our Skills Sessions are held via Zoom.

Besides attending the Board Meetings, the Education Coordinator develops Skills Sessions and recruits speakers. Many potential speakers can be found on the Speakers Bureau which is maintained by the Colorado Council of Genealogical Societies. Additionally, there are a number of people at Columbine who are ready, willing, and able to participate in a committee to make your tenure successful.

Working on the Columbine Board can be a rewarding experience. It's a chance to meet and work with other people, and an opportunity to use your mind. Columbine does not operate in a vacuum. We need our members to actively participate. This means YOU! Please, please contact me if you have any questions about this position. We need to continue to function as successfully as we have for the last fifty plus years. I can be reached at [president@columbinegenealogy.com](mailto:president@columbinegenealogy.com)

Thank you, Sean

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## 2026 COLUMBINE GENEALOGY BOARD

Back Row - Sharol Bettencourt – Nan Reubert – Stephen Asay – Neal Johnson – Susan Hollis  
Front Row – Sean McGuire – Ann Kerr – Jeanie Blanchard – Marylee Hagen – Jean Adams – Alicia Smart

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## ***COLUMBINE GENEALOGY MEETINGS***

**Meeting Times: (except June, July, August, & December)**

**Program Meetings** . . . . . 1:00 p.m. MT – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month - **In-Person & via Zoom**  
Meeting Place: Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 8545 E. Dry Creek Rd., Centennial, CO 80112

**December Holiday Event** . . . 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday in December – **In-Person**

**Education – Skills Sessions** . . . 1:00 p.m. MT – 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month - **via Zoom**

**Special Interest Groups** - open to CGHS Members Only

Deeds & Property Records, Wills, Early Church Records . . . 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the Month at 10:00 a.m. MT via Zoom only

Family Tree Maker Software . . . . . 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the Month at 10:00 a.m. MT via Zoom only

DO Over (or GO Over) . . . . . 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each Month at 10:00 a.m. MT via Zoom only

If you wish to attend a SIG contact Barbara Elliott at [columbinegenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:columbinegenealogy@gmail.com)

**Board of Directors Meetings** . . . . . 9:00 a.m. MT – 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month (except June, July & Dec.) **via Zoom**  
Columbine members and guests are welcome to attend our board meetings. Topics on the agenda include timely concerns in addition to regular status updates from board members. For more information or to receive a Zoom link, contact the president, Sean McGuire ([president@columbinegenealogy.com](mailto:president@columbinegenealogy.com)).

**Columbine Writers' Group** . . . . . 10:00 a.m. MT – 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month **via Zoom**

**Annual Dues:** Individual – \$35.00 Household – \$45.00

For information about Columbine meetings, changes, additions or cancellations visit our website: [www.columbinegenealogy.com](http://www.columbinegenealogy.com)

Find news updates at: [www.Facebook.com/columbinegenealogy/](https://www.facebook.com/columbinegenealogy/)

**BAD WEATHER PROCEDURE** – If the President postpones a meeting due to an emergency or bad weather, the Publicity chair will send emails to members. *Please do not call the Church office.*

### **PROGRAM PREVIEWS**

**Marylee Hagen, Vice President, Programs**



**Tuesday January 13 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

### **ADD LANGUAGE TOOLS TO YOUR FAMILY HISTORY TOOL BOX**



**Presenter: Sylvia Tracy-Doolos** has over 40 years of genealogical experience as a researcher, teacher, lecturer, and writer. She is a member and officer of the Colorado Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists, the International Society of British Genealogy and Family History (ISBGFH), and various other genealogical societies. Sylvia is a graduate of the ProGen course. She has a BA in History with a minor focusing on linguistics to better understand the role of language change and its effect on record keeping.

**Description:** Join Sylvia for an engaging presentation on free online tools that can enhance your family history research. She'll demonstrate how to use Google Alerts to track new information, Google Translate to overcome language barriers, and introduce Forvo for help with foreign name and place pronunciations. Discover how these powerful resources can help you uncover more about your ancestors.

**In-Person and via Zoom**

**Location – Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 8545 E. Dry Creek Road, Centennial, CO 80112**

**Tuesday February 10 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

## **BUILDING HISTORY RESOURCES**



**Presenter: Brian Trembath** is a Special Collections Librarian at Denver Public Library Special Collections and Archives (SCA). Brian has been with DPL for 18 years and is a lifelong Denver resident with deep Colorado roots stretching back five generations in Denver. He holds a Bachelors Degree in American Studies from the University of Colorado, Boulder, as well as Masters Degrees in Library and Information Science and Archival Studies from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He lives in Southwest Denver with his wife Megan and is the proud parent of three children - Henry, Grace and Nora.

**Description:** Join Brian Trembath for a fascinating case study that brings one Denver home—and the generations who lived there—to life using the full range of building history resources in the Denver Public Library’s collection. Learn how Brian traced the story of his great-great-grandfather and three more generations of his family who lived in the house until it was demolished to make way for the Valley Highway (known as I-25 today). This presentation combines genealogy and historical research, showing how to uncover the rich stories hidden in a single address.

**In-Person and via Zoom**

**Location – Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 8545 E. Dry Creek Road, Centennial, CO 80112**

## *WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH*

**Tuesday March 10 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

### **DO YOU BELIEVE THE FAMILY STORY?**

### **EMMA, A WOMAN’S STORY FROM IMMIGRATION TO HOMESTEADER**



**Presenter: Jean Larson Adams** is a member of Columbine Genealogy and the current Membership Co-Chairman. During her academic career, she earned BS and MS degrees in Science from Purdue University and an MBA from the University of Indianapolis. In 2011, Jean retired and moved to Colorado to be near her family. Genealogy became her new hobby and passion. During the winter months, Jean resides in Lone Tree, where she volunteers at the Lone Tree Arts Center, Cherokee Ranch and Castle, Columbine Genealogy, and the Swedish Genealogical Society of Colorado. In the summer, Jean lives in Breckenridge and volunteers with the Summit Historical Society as a schoolhouse museum docent and historical boat tour guide.

**Description:** Join Jean Larson Adams as she explains the complicated research into a family story about Emma Bengtsdotter, a Swedish woman who is not Jean’s ancestor. It all started with Jean’s research into the Swedish immigrants in Summit County, Colorado, and their occupations. One stood out – Emma (Bengtsdotter) Ballif, whose occupation was listed as a hay farmer in the 1910 census. A family story claimed that a man owed Emma \$12.00. When he realized he couldn’t pay, he gave Emma his homestead. Would you believe that story? Jean’s research started in Swedish records, then she went down the rabbit hole of US Federal Censuses, newspaper articles, oral histories, land records, maps, and cemetery records. The struggles to homestead land in the Rocky Mountains are documented in Emma’s Bureau of Land Management Application and Final Proof Statement. Jean discovered some fascinating twists to Emma’s homestead story and a connection to living relatives in Sweden.

**In-Person and via Zoom**

**Location – Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, 8545 E. Dry Creek Road, Centennial, CO 80112**

*Skills Session*

## EDUCATION PREVIEWS

Barbara Elliott, Coordinator



Tuesday, January 20 1:00 – 3:00 PM

# MAPPING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY; USING DIFFERENT MAPPING TOOLS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND ENRICH YOUR FAMILY HISTORY



**Presenter: Susie Wickman** - Originally from North Dakota, Susie Wickman has called Colorado home for more than 35 years. Her interest in genealogy began in 2002, after receiving a box of family photographs following her parents' passing. Passionate about family history, she has been giving genealogy presentations since 2017, sharing ways to write and map family stories. She believes it is the stories themselves that will spark interest in younger generations, and she hopes to help others preserve and tell those stories.

**Description:** Bring Your Family History to Life with Maps! Discover how to unlock hidden connections and visualize your ancestors' journeys with Mapping Family History! This engaging genealogy class will show you how to use maps as powerful tools for research and storytelling.

Learn to:

- Plot Property Ownership – Map all your ancestor's residences.
- Use Sanborn Maps – Pinpoint ancestor residences and find missing residences.
- Plot Homesteads – Reveal relationships between multiple homesteads.
- Map Immigration Routes – Follow your ancestors' footsteps across the globe.
- Chart Disasters – Understand how historical events impacted your family.
- Track Military Service – Visualize stations and deployments.
- Explore with Google Maps/Earth – Take a virtual tour of hometowns and the properties your ancestors owned.

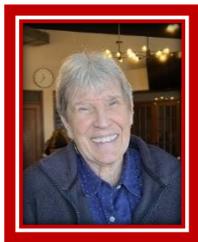


Whether you're breaking down brick walls in research or just want to see history come to life, this class is a must for every genealogy enthusiast. Join us and map your family history like never before!

**Presented via Zoom only**

**Tuesday February 17 1:00 – 3:00 PM**

## **USING FAMILYSEARCH AND FAMILYSEARCH LABS FOR FURTHERING YOUR RESEARCH**



**Presenter : Barbara Elliott** I have always been interested in family history as my father's parents were both born within 20 years after the close of the Civil War. After my family moved to Colorado in 1984, with Marathon Oil, I checked out the LDS Family History Center and have been researching ever since. Our son was in elementary school, so that gave me time to research during the day. I started with my father's mother's French side. Knowing where they came from and when they arrived in Jefferson County, New York, I ordered a few films from that area of France, bought a French/English dictionary and started reading those films. I was able to trace that side of the family back to the late 1500's.

After a few years researching and getting to know the ladies at the Family History Center, I was asked to volunteer. At that time, we were still ordering films to be sent to the center. I volunteered at the FHC for over 30 years and loved every minute. I learned a lot about researching and reading different languages, styles of writing and also the different software programs.

In the mid 1990's I joined Columbine Genealogical Society for a couple of years, but just didn't have time to go to any meetings, so let my membership lapse. I rejoined about 2015 and after a year, served on the Board as Secretary for 4 years, then President for 2 years. I have been Co-chair of Education the past 2 years. I love to share my knowledge of research and am hoping to have more time to research.

**Description:** Using and having your family line on FamilySearch.org is a benefit to all, even though it is open to the whole world. This is a tool to use to find more original records for your family history. As this website has billions of historical records from around the world, some available from your home and others available only at a Family History Center, this is a most advantageous website to use.

FamilySearch Labs has opened up new tools for our use and it is getting better every month. Don't be surprised to find that it can change monthly and what method you used to find something last month might have changed. The Full-Text Search is one area that will be discussed and there are many more options to try.

**Presented via Zoom only**



## **SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**Barbara Elliott, Chairperson**



Special Interest Groups are a benefit available to Columbine Genealogy members only. Preregistration is required to receive your Zoom link. Contact Barbara Elliott at [ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com) to register. If you are not currently a member, please consider joining to enjoy exclusive benefits, expert guidance and a supportive community.

## DEEDS • PROPERTY RECORDS • WILLS • EARLY CHURCH RECORDS

This SIG combines the Deeds & Property SIG and the Early Church Records SIG to provide a comprehensive resource for learning how to find elusive ancestors.



**Learn research strategies:** Gain valuable insights on using deeds, property records, wills, and early church records to trace your family history.

**Ask your questions:** Bring your research challenges and roadblocks for group discussion and support.



**Share your knowledge:** Help others in their genealogical journeys by sharing your experiences and expertise.

Preregistration is required. Contact Barbara Elliot at [ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com) to register.

**Monday, January 5, 2026**

**Monday, February 2, 2026**

**Monday, March 2, 2026**

Group meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of each month at 10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **via Zoom.**



## FAMILY TREE MAKER SOFTWARE

We are using the FTM Companion Guide and will cover a chapter per month. The concept of this class is to teach each other. This is a great way to learn how to use your FTM software.

### What to Expect

**Guided Learning:** We will work through the FTM Companion Guide (available for free on the MacKiev website), covering a chapter per month.

**Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Share your knowledge and learn from others in a supportive group setting.

**Hands-on Experience:** Get practical tips and tricks for navigating FTM and building your family tree.

No experience necessary! Whether you are a beginner or an experienced FTM user, all are welcome. Come join us and unlock the full potential of Family Tree Maker!

**Thursday, January 22, 2026**

**Thursday, February 26, 2026**

**Thursday, March 26, 2026**

Group meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (unless otherwise noted)  
**via Zoom**

Preregistration is required.  
Contact Barbara Elliot at [ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com) to register.



# “DO OVER (or GO OVER)”

By Jean Adams



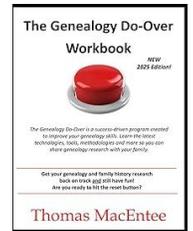
**Presenter:** Jean Adams will lead these sessions with the assistance of volunteer attendees using Thomas MacEntee’s book “**The Genealogy Do-Over Workbook.**” available on Amazon, \$8.99 plus shipping in soft cover, also available on Kindle. Free downloads from <https://genealogybargains.com>

**Description:** This new Special Interest Group (SIG) will look at the multitude of items presented in Thomas MacEntee’s book. Using the chapters of the book, we will attack this challenging task cheerfully and thoughtfully while encouraging each other in our efforts to **Do-Over (or Go-Over)** our research.

**Sign up:** If you are a member and are interested, send Jean Adams an email: [jadams31216@gmail.com](mailto:jadams31216@gmail.com)

- Monday, January 26,** 10:00 – 11:00 Discussion of Chapter 5
- Monday, February 23,** 10:00 – 11:00 Discussion of Chapters 6 & 7
- Monday, March 23,** 10:00 – 11:00 Discussion of Chapters 8 & 9

Presented via Zoom



# WRITERS GROUP

Becky Clark, Chairperson

The Columbine Writers Group meets **via Zoom** each month on the third Wednesday at 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Join us to get friendly support, share in the camaraderie and get your family stories down on paper to leave as a legacy for other family members. For more information, contact Becky Clark at [ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbineGenealogy@gmail.com).



Writers Group is a benefit available to Columbine Genealogy members only. If you are not currently a member, please consider joining to enjoy exclusive benefits, expert guidance and a supportive community.

- Wednesday, January 21, 2026**
- Wednesday, February 18, 2026**
- Wednesday, March 18, 2026**



# GENEALOGY IS ADDICTING!

## THANK YOU TO OUR FALL 2025 SPEAKERS



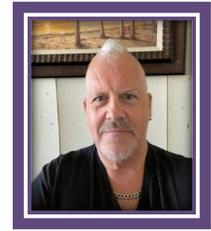
**Marylee Hagen**  
Vietnam in Memory  
Program  
September 9



**Diane Elder**  
Genealogy Research  
with AI  
September 16



**Sarah Jack**  
End Witch Hunts –  
Salem Witches  
October 14



**Thomas MacEntee**  
Mysterious Death of  
Anna McPhillips  
October 21



**Sandy Ronayne**  
WWI – Overview, Records/Sources  
November 11



**Julia A. Anderson**  
Beyond The Brick Wall –  
Pre-1850 Research  
November 18



**Patty Clayton**  
Ben and Ole's Land  
December 9



### Columbine Genealogy History

Do you know how Columbine Genealogy began? What are some of our customs and traditions? What contributions have been made by our members over the years? Learn more about these things while enjoying our "Columbine family" photos at [Our History in Photos](#) at Friends Corner.



**By Jean Adams & Susan Hollis Membership Co-Chairs**

We are pleased to welcome our new and returning members and look forward to getting to know them better.

**June Schwertfager** from Indiana

**Sue Rosser**

**Colleen Foley Schupp** has been researching her family for eleven years. One of her ancestors, Henry Brunner, ( Swiss) married Charlotte Pormetter (Prussian/German) and later received Bounty Land from service in the Mexican-American War from NY. They later settled in Wisconsin and eventually Nebraska.

**Dawn Bunyak** first joined Columbine in the 1980s when the group met at Bemis Library. She served as secretary for several years. She and her husband live in Littleton half the year and Florida the rest of the time. She has been busy with publishing her work on her Civil War ancestors and also researching her husband's Slovak immigrant ancestry. Dawn and I ran into each other in October at the CGS lunch bunch at Colore on South Broadway and had a nice chat catching up on old times at Columbine.

**Carol Stall** first joined Columbine in 2008, and served for several years as Co-Chair of Membership, and also on the Hospitality committee. She worked on the transition to computer files which was a huge task! She has used the last few years to expand her genealogy, and is pleased with her progress!

All Columbine Genealogy members can list their research surnames and places on our membership software after logging in as a member.

Here is the link: <https://columbinegenealogy.membershiptoolkit.com/story/383610>

Let's see if we can help others researching the same surnames as ours or in the same locations!



## 250<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

By Barbara Elliott

On July 4, 2026 our country will be celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As our country marks this momentous occasion, we would not be celebrating if not for those brave men and women of colonial times that decided to rise up against their oppressors.

In the past 250 years our country has endured countless hardships that has seen the loss of many men and women who have fought to preserve our freedoms. Many more will die to keep our nation free against all odds.

As our country marks this momentous occasion, ask yourselves what would our country be like if we had lost the revolution? Would our forefathers have risen up again to fight for freedom and a new nation? Even though our country has been marked by periods of significant conflicts that have shaped us, would America have become a global power?

**Cold Case #2013***Continued from Page 1*

the Fidance family gravesite, under a very large polished granite stone engraved with “Fidanza” in large lettering on both sides, and four flat but ornate headstones underneath, at the head of each of the four filled graves.

Silverbrook Cemetery held a number of my aunts and uncles as well. The Catholic Cemetery down the road, Cathedral Cemetery, is where all of my extended family is buried, but Grandpop, Joseph James Fidanza, was longtime friends with the Paul White family who owned Silverbrook. Grandpop and family lived on Lancaster Avenue across the street from Silverbrook and owned a monument company for many decades, the Elsmere Marble and Granite Company, that he operated with his eldest son, my Uncle Vincent. Grandpop had rows and rows of expensive polished marble and granite gravestones for purchase at the property and as kids we would climb on them when Grandpop wasn't looking.

So the day we arrived we drove through the cemetery and stopped at the big Fidanza stone. Weirdly, I didn't see the four flat headstones. Feeling maybe they had sunk under an overgrowth of grass, I pulled out my trusty pocket knife and poked around. Nada. No headstones. The four graves were completely unmarked. How confusing. I've seen these headstones many times. I have photos of them. What the [expletive deleted]?



Me, on discovering the lack of headstones under the big Fidanza stone, 2013.

I was only going to be there for a weekend, and had fun family activities on my schedule. But I did try to ask a few questions of various cousins about the missing headstones. Nobody knew anything. Most of them wouldn't know anything, but there were a select few who should most definitely have some useful information.



Kitty and me at the reunion.

I asked cousin Vinnie, who now holds the deed to the Fidance gravesite, what happened to the headstones. He had no idea. How odd, I thought, and how patently not believable. When I asked cousin Deb what she knew about the missing headstones, I got a wide-eyed shake of her head. She had no idea. You understand, her mom's headstone was among the missing.

As she was shaking her head, I saw her husband watching her intently, as if to see whether she could successfully pull off this performance.

I don't know what I expected, but I sure didn't expect a full-blown coverup over missing headstones. In the weeks following, I launched a more comprehensive investigation via telephone, email and postal mail. I enlisted my cousin Marcia to go over to the Silverbrook office and see if there were any records with regard to the disappearance and talk to them about any information they had. I also asked her to poke around Silverbrook's back lot to see if they were back in the work area. Zilch. Marcia was actually asked to present evidence the stones ever existed.

Next, I wrote a formal letter to Paul White III, current owner of the cemetery, and mailed copies to my very elderly Uncle Anthony, the last surviving member of his generation; his son, my cousin Anthony; cousin Vinnie; cousin Deborah; Marcia and my two brothers.

The letter stated that I was pretty shaken up by the disappearance of the headstones, and asked where they were, why they were missing, and when they were removed. I enclosed photos of the stones to show that they had indeed existed. I pointed out to Paul that his and my grandparents had been longtime friends, that my grandfather had entrusted our family's burials to his family, that the burial contract promised perpetual care, and that I hoped that trust hadn't been misplaced. Pun intended.



I got a call from Paul White very quickly. He said he had no idea what had happened to the stones. He told me that in years past he had been chewed out by Uncle Anthony over the fact some of the stones had heaved on a couple corners and had been scratched by the cemetery lawnmowers. Aha, I thought, a clue. And a growing suspicion. Did Uncle Anthony have something to do with this?

About two weeks later Paul called me again. He complained (in more colorful language than this) that Uncle Anthony was a true pain to deal with. He said Unc had called him saying he needed to replace the missing stones and what would it cost? When Paul stated the not inconsiderable sum, Unc cursed him out and then hung up on him. Unc, of course, had received a copy of my letter to Paul. I am proud to say I did not laugh until after I hung up the phone. The picture was starting to clear.

A couple more phone calls to cousins this time with pointed questions revealed that someone had seen a stack of headstones in Uncle Anthony's backyard, but that was before he and his girlfriend had moved into assisted living some years back.

Remember, since I hadn't been back to Delaware in 17 years, I had no idea, and even still have no idea, exactly when this heist took place. Nor, really, why. What I know is that an old man in his 80s or 90s could not possibly have lifted nearly-one-foot-thick headstones weighing several hundred pounds apiece out of the ground himself, tossed them into the trunk of his car, and taken off with them. I can speculate that my cousin Vinny and a few of his accomplices, er, buddies, could well have gotten this done for Uncle Anthony.

It had become obvious to me during that 2013 visit that cousins Deb and Vinnie and Uncle Anthony were buddies, and the three of them were thick as thieves (and yes, pun intended). So it was clear to me that Deb and Vinnie were for some reason protecting Uncle Anthony. Now, what they thought I would do to my curmudgeonly old uncle if they'd come clean, I'm sure I don't know. I do know that my grandfather would have turned in his grave over what happened. The motto of the Elsmere Marble and Granite Company, prominently displayed on Grandpop's shop and on his business card, was "Mark Every Grave."

### Postscript:

Over that winter I contacted the only remaining Italian-run monument company along Lancaster Avenue between the two big cemeteries, Pauley Cemetery Memorials. When George Pauley told me the cost of replacing these headstones I gulped. Since Grandpop was in the business, he could afford the best polished granite markers, filigreed with his own designs by his own hands, for his family gravesite. George suggested that I just let him etch the names and dates on the big Fidanza stone. It would be a whole lot less expensive. I thought about it, and I decided that Poppop would probably not be happy about having his beautiful Fidanza stone defaced.

So I did what any self-respecting procrastinator would do. I dithered. For a few years. And all the while I could feel Mom up in the sky shaking a finger down at me, reminding me that her grave was unmarked. So six years after my initial discovery of the stolen headstones, George Pauley went out to Silverbrook and engraved the names and dates on the big polished granite marker for me.

Where did the missing headstones end up? Who knows?

The last detail to impart is that Uncle Anthony was subsequently interred under the big Fidanza marker, and his name is on it too.



## ARE YOU A COLUMBINE MEMBER?



Then you have access to videos of recent programs. Videos are generally posted for a limited amount of time which is determined by the presenter. Members are notified when new videos are posted and the password needed for access is included in the notification. Go to

[ColumbineGenealogy.com](http://ColumbineGenealogy.com) select the **Members** tab and scroll down to select **Videos** and then choose the one you would want.



## THE MALCOLM H. STERN-NARA GIFT FUND (aka Stern-NARA Fund)

By Julie McKemy



As members of Columbine Genealogy and people engaged in family history, we have heard the Stern-NARA Fund mentioned or seen it listed on the membership form under “Contributions.” Just what is this fund? It was created by Rabbi Malcolm L. Stern (1915-1994) who contributed much to the genealogy community during his more than 44-year career as a genealogist. Rabbi Stern established the Gift Fund in 1983 with the aim of preserving and imaging research materials in the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. (NARA). Through the financial support of societies and individuals, records at NARA are being added to, preserved and imaged and are then made accessible to researchers at the Regional Archives or online.



Over the years Columbine Genealogy has supported the work of the fund by budgeting for an annual gift that is then supplemented with the donations of individual members. This year the Stern-NARA Fund gift is \$145.00.

You can learn more about the fund at the NGS website where there is a list of the completed and ongoing projects. Columbine’s membership form includes the option to make a donation.

<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/malcolm-h-stern-nara-giftfund/#1600342118036-302a5bf1-ba9c>

### Did You Know?

There are multiple members who are doing research on the surname Adams. Is this one of your surnames? Who else is researching that surname?

What about **your** surname? Is someone else researching it also? Check it out at [Tell Us About Your Genealogical Research](#) at Friends Corner.

## COLUMBINE GENEALOGY LIBRARY FUND

By Donna Chrislip, Acquisitions Coordinator



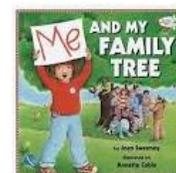
I have served as Acquisitions Coordinator for Columbine Genealogy for the 2025 calendar year. My interest stems from the satisfaction experienced from helping others learn about their ancestors, as well as their stories.

The first thing I learned about the Acquisitions Coordinator position is that Columbine Genealogy has a budget for the sole purpose of providing genealogical resources to area libraries. Second, CG Board members are very supportive of this position through suggestions of genealogical publications helpful to genealogy researchers. Third, much autonomy is extended to the Coordinator, also, to select sources she/he believes to fulfill the purpose of the position and, fourth, Bemis Library in Littleton literally has volumes of genealogical resources; CG has donated multiple books to their collection.



Initial steps were to contact several libraries in Centennial, Englewood and Littleton. Of the folks I spoke with, none of them maintain a genealogy library. The only genealogy resources they provide access to are online, such as Ancestry, Family Search, etc. databases. Bemis Library provides access to both online and printed book sources of genealogical information. CG continues to fund research publications for the Bemis Genealogy Collection and will continue to contact area libraries whose needs may change.

Toward extending genealogical interest, CG has begun to explore if/what younger children might want to discover about where their families are from, what their names are, who the parents of their parents are, what they do/did to make a living, etc. Children who are a little older who are in elementary school, may be developing an interest in their uniqueness, what they have inherited from their ancestors, forensics to investigate crimes – DNA explained in an engaging format. The Genealogy Librarian and Children's Librarian at Bemis Library have collaborated to select three books soon to be delivered.



I am grateful to have had the opportunity over the past year to gain valuable knowledge about access to genealogy resources in our area and, through CG, to avail others of the wealth of information that is accessible to them.



## THE LAST OF THE GREENIES

By Penelope “Pen” Name

This license plate was recently seen at the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church parking lot. The plate is primarily green, with white letters. Recognizing it as a rare bird, Ms. Name decided to interview the owner. Wishing to remain anonymous, Ms. Name agreed to keep the owner’s name confidential. She’ll call him Mr. Grouch in this article.

A little known fact these days is that Wyomingites referred to Colorado visitors as “greenies.” This was based not only on their collective prejudices against residents of our fair state, but on the color of the license plate on their cars. Mr. Grouch is proud to still have this plate on his vehicle. Mr. Grouch told me that he purchased his grandmother’s 1963 Plymouth Valiant back in the 1970’s, using the clever idea of becoming a joint owner of the car with his grandmother Bernice. He got a great price from Bernice, along with his promise to take care of her transportation needs. Doing so, he became legally entitled to renew the plates with the same letters and numbers.

In the earlier days, Colorado DMV would issue brand new plates every year, using the same characters as before. In 1976, Colorado decided to celebrate its Centennial by issuing a different design, using the colors red, white and blue. However, someone at DMV or perhaps the state pen ordered the wrong shade of blue. All the plates were manufactured at Canon City using eggshell blue, so they became somewhat of a joke.

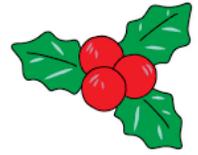
In 1977, the old design came back, and a scheme of using registration stickers on the 1977 plate, rather than manufacturing them all over again. So, Mr. Grouch can proudly state that his license plate is 48 years old. It looks pretty good, doesn't it! One would never know that this particular plate has been on that 1973 Valiant, a 1984 Jeep, a 1995 Ford Explorer, a Subaru, and this red Toyota 4Runner. One reason that the plate looks so good is that Mr. Grouch paid an amateur license plate restorer to give it a fresh coat of paint.

The Colorado General Assembly and the Governor have ruined Mr. Grouch’s ability to transfer this plate to any future vehicle purchases. State law now mandates that new plates must be issued upon every purchase of a vehicle. So Mr. Grouch will have to be satisfied by driving his current buggy at least 200,000 miles more. And Wyomingites can still call him a “greenie” when he ventures north.



# DECEMBER 9 MEETING

*A good time was had by all!*



Speaker, Patty Clayton



Ginger Van Zyl - Gae Jacobs - Julie Haynie



Cheryl & Ron Floberg - Marylee Hagen - Alicia Smart - Marge Healy



Julie Haynie -  
Donna Chrislip



Patty Clayton



Dick & Karen Dvorchak - Stephen Asay - Maggie Schmidt - Chuck Towne



Patty Clayton - Gae Jacobs



2025 BOARD - Sean McGuire - Ann Kerr - Nan Reubert - Jeanie Blanchard - Julie McKemy - Stephen Asay - Marylee Hagen - Susan Hollis - Neal Johnson - Jean Adams



Chris Yaros



DJ Inman - Beth (visitor) - Gary Witt - Anita Burbank-Jenkins - Nan Reubert

# Arapahoe County Completes Digitization of All Public Records Dating Back to 1861

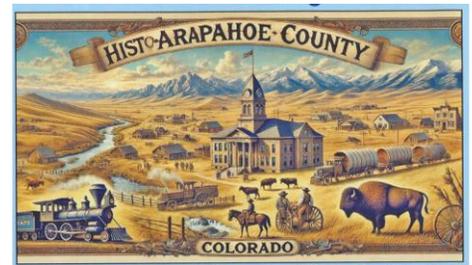
After a multi-year effort, the *Arapahoe County Clerk and Recorder's Office* has successfully digitized all county records dating back to the county's founding in 1861, creating a comprehensive database that preserves more than a century and a half of local history.

The ambitious digitization project ensures that irreplaceable historical documents – from the earliest homestead records to modern filings – are permanently protected from deterioration, natural disasters, and human error while making them easily accessible to residents, researchers, and future generations. Digitizing County records also means residents, historians, and anyone with an internet connection can search for records at their convenience, 24 hours a day.

“Preserving our county’s history is one of the most sacred responsibilities of the Clerk and Recorder’s office,” said Arapahoe County Clerk & Recorder Joan Lopez. “This digital transformation not only safeguards these invaluable records for posterity but also makes them more accessible than ever before to the community we serve.”

The project was completed at minimal cost to taxpayers through strategic grant funding, with the majority of expenses covered by the *Electronic Recording Technology Board*.

The digitization project protects all county records from physical damage including fire, water damage, deterioration, and mishandling. Additionally, researchers, historians, business partners, and members of the public can now search public records online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The database provides free access to records. Copies with watermarks are free of charge and certified copies are available for a small fee.



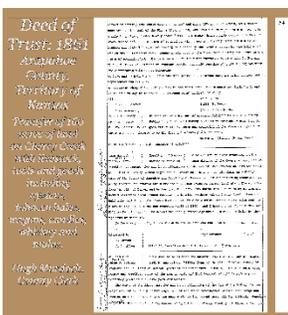
Reprinted from the *Glendale Cherry Creek Chronicle* with permission. Submitted by Sean McGuire

The main link to the Recording Division webpage is: [www.arapahoerecords.gov](http://www.arapahoerecords.gov) – scroll down the page to “Search for Documents,” to see a link to a PDF document and a short video that explains how to set up a free account and use the search tool.

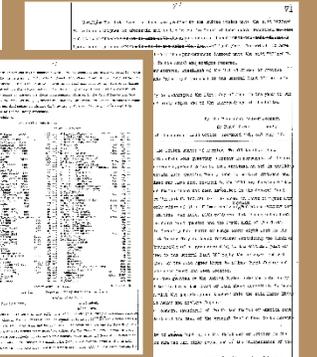


Record Books

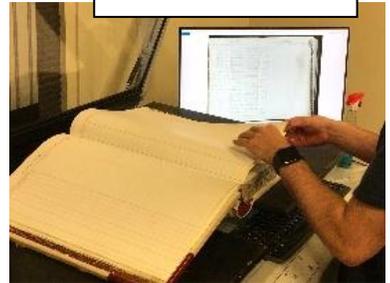
1861 Deed of Trust



1866: Pres. Andrew Johnson grants land to widow of soldier for his service in the War of 1812



Scanning Records



1868 land grant to widow of War of 1812

## SUGGESTION BOX



Do you have an idea or suggestion that you would like to share with Columbine? Maybe you have a genealogy subject you would like presented at a meeting. Or you have a comment about a prior program. Maybe you have an idea about something Columbine might do. We are open to all suggestions. Your ideas matter!



Just send an email to President Sean McGuire at [president@columbinegenealogy.com](mailto:president@columbinegenealogy.com) and he will forward all suggestions to the appropriate committee for action.

Thank you for your input!

## YOUR NEWSLETTER

**Jeanie Blanchard, Editor**



Think about contributing something for our next issue. Your article can be a couple of paragraphs or a couple of pages. This is the 250 Anniversary of the United States and the 150 Anniversary of Colorado. Do you have something you would like to relate about either of these anniversaries?

Maybe you don't feel confident enough to submit an article. This is a great reason for you to join the **Writers Group** to help you enhance your writing technique.

Please send your article for the April newsletter by March 1. If you have questions send them to [newsletter@columbinegenealogy.com](mailto:newsletter@columbinegenealogy.com) and I will respond.

Thank you to the many people who contributed to your January newsletter.

### RootsTech 2026 Conference



March 5 – 7, 2026

Roots Tech 2026 will be held both online and in-person at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. Register for the in-person conference on the RootsTech website or register for the free online option.

### National Genealogical Society Conference



May 27 – 30, 2026

Join the National Genealogical Society in Fort Wayne for their 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Family History Conference. The theme is “**America at 250.**” Consider the generations of stories and experiences that shaped this nation.



My access to Columbine Genealogy Members doesn't work!

**What happened?**

Did you renew your membership?



**NEW OR RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**COLUMBINE GENEALOGY**

**P.O. BOX 2074, CENTENNIAL, CO 80161-2074**

MEMBER NAME (1): \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBER NAME (2): \_\_\_\_\_

(As it will appear on your name tag and in the Membership List)

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS (1): \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (h or c): \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS (2): \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (h or c): \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT SURNAMES ARE YOU RESEARCHING? \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT LOCATIONS ARE YOU RESEARCHING? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to have the above research information included in tables and maps and maintained in a member-only portion of our website? **Circle one:** Yes or No

Columbine Genealogy is **member-operated** and **needs involvement** from each member. As a member, please select one or more of the following **volunteer** areas as your way to **support** Columbine Genealogy. Check, circle or underline your choice:

- Communications - Submit newsletter articles, Community outreach (libraries, marketing, social media)
- Genealogy - Teaching or translating, providing research, mentoring new members
- Share your Knowledge - Accounting, auditing, software, Zoom co-hosting, video recording/editing
- Help at meetings - room setup, photography, refreshments.

**New or Renewal Membership**

By joining any time after July 1, your membership will be active until December 31 of the following year.

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES**

\$35.00 per individual \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$45.00 per couple \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

Columbine Genealogy General Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Stern-NARA Fund (Record Digitization) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Columbine Genealogy Library Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

<b>For Membership Use Only</b>	
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Revised 09/10/2025	

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