

We began the new year with a round table of 22 enthusiastic researchers, asking questions and getting guidance from others in the group. Some of the highlights were:

Jay Shock gave an intro to the genealogy resources on Facebook. You have to have a Facebook account to access them, and many of them are "Closed" so you ask to join them, but access is normally quickly and easily granted. Jay advised if you're not into social media like Facebook, provide the least amount of information about yourself when you set up an account. We looked at two local sites: Allegheny County PA Genealogy and Washington County PA Genealogy Research Group. Join and you can ask questions, get research assistance and read about the latest news on genealogy research in that particular area.

There's likely a group for any place you might be researching, so put the place name and "genealogy" in the search box at the top of the Facebook page and see what comes up. There's even one for assistance translating German documents called German Genealogy Records Translation.

A new member asked what forms to use when you're just getting started. The most important one is the Family Group Sheet, followed by a Pedigree Chart. Google those terms and find one you like. Here are samples of each you can print out and copy.

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/d9/d5/3e/d9d53ee418f81b599fcaa9376ccf3a88.jpg>

<http://www.vvhcgs.com/ChartSixGen.jpg>

A site recommended if you want to know the names of cemeteries near any town in the U.S. is www.epodunk.com

www.jewishgen.org requires you to register to use but it's free and has an excellent gazetteer for Eastern European towns and the names they might have been called in years past.

Do you have a family with two or three different spellings of the last name and you don't know what it was before they landed on U.S. shores? Go to familysearch or ancestry and enter just the last name and select that you want to restrict the search to that exact spelling. Add a country, maybe a town if you know it. One of the spellings will likely stand out. Or, if the town is small enough, don't put in a last name but restrict the search to only that town name and a time frame they lived there. Scroll through the records for that town and you'll probably see your correct name.

A person asked where they might be able to find a lost certificate honoring a Westinghouse employee who worked at Los Alamos on the atomic bomb project. Two locations to visit are the Archives of Industrial Society at the University of Pittsburgh Hillman Library and the Westinghouse Collection at the Heinz History Center.

If you're new to genealogy or just want some help, you can always visit the family History Center at 46 School Street in Green Tree. It's free and there is always a volunteer there to help you. They have a dozen online sites that are free that you normally have to pay to use. https://help.familysearch.org/publishing/699/106761_f.SAL_Public.html The hours are 10:30 - 6:30 on Tuesdays, 10:00 - 8:00 on Thursdays and 10:00 - 1:00 on Saturdays. Jim Stuber volunteers there two or three times a month. If you want to schedule a time when he's there, respond to this email and arrangements can be made.

John Frenie ended the meeting with a check list of things to do in 2015:

1. Take a class - watch our minutes for upcoming free classes. Check out <http://www.gripitt.org/> for week long classes on specific topics
2. Review past research - familysearch and Ancestry are both adding many tens of million of records a year to search online

3. Attack a challenging problem - there may now be information online that wasn't available previously
4. Share your research - print out your research and share it with your family, put it online for long lost cousins to find
5. Find a genealogy partner - engage a member of your extended family. Our meetings can be a part of that too