



AGS Ezine

Newsletter of the Arkansas Genealogical Society
Vol. 20, No. 3, April 2025
Sara White, Editor

Note from the Editor:

Hello, family historians and genealogists! It's spring, and we have exciting news! If you're a member of the Arkansas Genealogical Society, watch your mailbox for the return of the *Arkansas Family Historian* quarterly publication! This valuable resource contains stories and records from all over Arkansas' rich history. We index every name mentioned in the AFH. Recently, a reader told us that he discovered records from his great-grandmother in a past issue. Sound interesting? Consider becoming a member today! We'll mail you a copy of the AFH every quarter, and you'll have exclusive access to recent PDF issues not available to the public. [Join today!](#)

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April Events

Saturday, April 12

1:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m.: Researching Women in the American Revolution

Hosted by the Glenview Public Library

[Online via Zoom](#)

Sunday, April 13

2:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.: Downtown Walking Exploration

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Lobby

Monday, April 14

5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Volunteer Genealogy Assistance with D.A.R. Members

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Genealogy Library

6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Kings, Queens, and Castles! Am I Related to Royalty?

Hosted by Mid-Continent Public Library

[Online via Zoom](#)

Tuesday, April 15

7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.: From Clutter to Clean: Old Family Photos

Hosted by the Wisconsin State Genealogical Society

[Online via Zoom](#)

Thursday, April 17

6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Introduction to Genealogy

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

Center St. and University Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Computer Training Lab

Monday, April 21

5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Volunteer Genealogy Assistance with D.A.R. Members

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Genealogy Library

Tuesday, April 22

6:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Intermediate Genealogy: Immigration & Naturalization Records

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Ann Henry Board Room

Tuesday, April 22

6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.: Researching Your Female Ancestors

Hosted by the Pikes Peak Library District

[Online via Zoom](#)

Saturday, April 26

12:30 p.m.–4:00 p.m.: Arkansas State Archives Spring 2025 Symposium

Hosted by the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History

503 E. 9th St., Little Rock, AR 72202

Monday, April 28

5:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m.: Volunteer Genealogy Assistance with D.A.R. Members

Hosted by the Fayetteville Public Library

401 W. Mountain St., Fayetteville, AR 72701, in the Genealogy Library

Tuesday, April 29

5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.: Dangers of Online Family Trees

Hosted by the Chemung County Library District

[Online via Zoom](#)

Thursday, May 1

5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.: Genealogy Basics

Hosted by the Pikes Peak Library District

[Online via Zoom](#)

10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.: Her Story: Discovering the Genealogy of your Matriarchs

Hosted by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library

[Online via Zoom](#)

Saturday, May 3

2:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m.: Researching House Histories

Hosted by the Mid-Continent Public Library

[Hybrid via Zoom](#)

Upcoming Events

Country Doctors of Arkansas Heritage Seekers Genealogy Club

April 14, 2025

Online via Zoom

Country Doctors hold a special place in our lives. Most of these men and women are originally from small towns and make the conscious decision to return. Each little town has its own story with diverse characters and dramas. The country doctor often acts as part of the glue that holds these small towns together, acting as the father confessor, a priest of technology, and the narrator of the town story.

Sam Taggart is a family doctor, raised in the White River Delta in Augusta, Arkansas. After medical school at UAMS, he completed a Family Practice Residency. He retired in 2013 as the senior partner and founder of Family Practice Associates of Benton. In 2012, he wrote a book describing a narrative history of health and disease in Arkansas over the last 200 years. The book is *The Public's Health*.

In 2015, he created the Arkansas Physician's Oral History Project. As a part of this project, he went around the state interviewing country physicians to create a video record of their lives and the practice of medicine in rural Arkansas for the last 75 years. In June of 2021, he published *Country Doctors of Arkansas*, as one of the products of that study. In April 2023, he published *For Every Family, A Family Doctor*, a narrative history of the modern family medicine movement in Arkansas since 1947.

He and his wife, Dr. Annette Enderlin are presently working on a book called *Against the Odds: Arkansas Women in Medicine before 1972*.

For details see heritageseekersar.com

Welcome to our "Meet the Publication Team" series! Each month, we'll introduce you to a member of our talented team dedicated to bringing you the latest news, research, and resources from our genealogical society.

This month, we're introducing you to Susan Lasley, contributing author.



Meet the Publication Team: Susan Lasley, Contributing Author

What inspired your interest in genealogy and historical research?

My paternal grandfather—my father's dad—died in Little Rock when my father was four years old. This was during the Great Depression, and my grandmother took her son and moved in with her family in Lincoln County. One result was that my father grew up knowing very little about his father's family, so he couldn't tell us much about them. I wanted to know who they were, where they came from, the works. Genealogy has been important to learning about them. And a DNA test led me to "unknown" second cousins, with whom I now chat every week.

What is your role on the team, and what excites you most about it?

As one of the Contributing Authors of the *Arkansas Family Historian*, I focus on writing articles to help readers understand Arkansans and their family histories. What excites me most is uncovering stories about Arkansans who were well-known in their day but whose stories have been lost to time and modernity. Researching them always makes me smile.

Do you have a favorite genealogical discovery or a story from your own research?

One discovery was that my half-sister's grandfather had shot someone in 1918, but the Little Rock newspapers that covered the incident at the time didn't name the victim. Trying to figure out who had been shot took a lot of effort, but I did it. The work taught me the importance of using a variety of different sources, evaluating those sources, and being thorough. The research and subsequent case study helped me become a board-certified genealogist.

What is one genealogical resource or tip you think every researcher should know about?

I recommend Cyndi's List. It's incredibly helpful because it includes hundreds of sources, including those we might not think about as immediately relevant to genealogy. For example, memberships in organizations like Eastern Star or Masons can help answer a genealogical question about where a person might have been living at a particular time. I've found Cyndi's List invaluable in my own research.

Outside of genealogy, what hobbies or interests do you enjoy?

When I'm not researching family histories, I am a foodie. I enjoy trying new cuisines, tasting new flavors, and connecting with people through food. I love to eat out, and I love to cook.

**Stay tuned next month to meet another member of our publication team!
If you have any questions or suggestions for our publications, feel free to reach out.
We love hearing from our readers and members.**

What's in a Name?

As we have been sharing the four-part article series on ChatGPT, we decided to ask ClaudeAI the following:

"Hello! As an expert genealogist, could you please create a two-paragraph summary for a newsletter explaining how a name can vary depending on the country being researched? We can use the name John as an example."

The Results:

The name **John** provides an excellent example of how a single name can take many forms across different cultures and languages throughout history. In Germanic countries, you might find names like **Johann**, **Johannes**, or **Hans**, while Slavic regions use variants such as **Jan**, **Ivan**, or **Janusz**. The Greek form **Ioannis** influenced many European variations, including the Italian **Giovanni**, Spanish **Juan**, Portuguese **João**, French **Jean**, and Irish **Seán**. Each of these variations emerged through unique linguistic and cultural evolution, making it crucial for genealogists to familiarize themselves with these alternatives when tracing family histories across borders.

When conducting genealogical research, it's important to remember that historical records may contain multiple variations of the same name, even within a single country or region. For instance, a person named **John** in English records might appear as **Joannes** in Latin church documents, **Evan** in Welsh records, or **Ian** in Scottish documents. Additionally, spelling variations were common before standardized spelling became widespread, leading to forms like **Jon**, **Jhon**, or **Johne** appearing in historical documents.

Understanding these variations and their cultural contexts is essential for successful genealogical research, as overlooking alternative forms of a name could mean missing crucial records about your ancestors.

For more information, we encourage you to read: "The Name 'John' in Different European Languages" at [BrilliantMaps.com](https://brilliantmaps.com)

Using ChatGPT For Genealogy Part 3:

How To Write an Email to a Cousin Using ChatGPT

ChatGPT



By Josephine Hardy

As we have already seen from our previous installments, ChatGPT is an invaluable genealogy tool for research, analysis, and transcription. What about drafting an email to a relation? Yes, it can do that too!

What Is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) created to have human-like conversations. You interact with ChatGPT by typing in questions, statements, or any other text, as you would converse with a friend in a text message or a Facebook chat. Think of it like having a conversation with a very knowledgeable person who has read every single page on the Internet and nearly every book ever written. By processing and learning from all of these sources, it has a very good understanding of human language and is knowledgeable on a wide range of topics. Interaction with ChatGPT uses this knowledge to understand what you're saying and generate appropriate responses.

Important things to remember before we get started:

- ChatGPT is not always accurate.
- It is not always grammatically correct.
- Always fact-check and proofread everything you read on ChatGPT.

How to Access ChatGPT

You will need to sign up for a free account to use ChatGPT. You can use it on your computer browser (chat.openai.com) or on your phone. Download it on the Apple app store or Google Play app store.

With a premium account, you can show images to ChatGPT to start a chat, ask it to create an image, or chat with your voice. To keep things simple, this series will focus on using ChatGPT with text, so there is no need to sign up for a paid account unless you want to.

Using ChatGPT to Draft Your Email: A Step-By-Step Guide

If you're looking to reach out to a cousin for information about your family tree, ChatGPT can help you craft a clear, respectful, and engaging email. Here's a guide on how to use ChatGPT to draft such an email, along with examples and tips for getting the most out of this tool.

Define Your Purpose

Clearly outline what you want to achieve with your email. Are you seeking specific information, asking for documents, or just initiating a conversation about your shared family history?

Provide Context

Give ChatGPT background information about your genealogical research, including any relevant details about your family tree and what information you already have.

Ask for Specific Help

Be clear about what you need from your cousin. Whether it's specific details about ancestors, clarification of family stories, or sharing of old photographs, specify these in your prompt to ChatGPT.

Review and Personalize

Once ChatGPT generates a draft, review it for accuracy and personalize it with your own voice and additional details that might be relevant.

Example Email 1: Requesting Information

Prompt:

I need to draft an email to my cousin asking for their help with my genealogical research. I've been working on our family tree and have specific questions about our great-grandparents, [Great-Grandparents' Names]. I want to ask if they have any old photos, letters, or stories about them that they could share. Also, I'm looking for information about [Specific Ancestor] and their siblings to fill in some gaps in the family tree. The tone should be polite and engaging. Can you help me draft this email?

ChatGPT's Response:

Subject: Seeking Your Help with Our Family Tree Research

Hi [Cousin's Name],

I hope this email finds you well! I've been diving into our family's genealogy recently and am excited to share what I've discovered so far. I'm reaching out to ask for your assistance with a few details that I believe you might be able to help with.

Specifically, I'm trying to gather more information about our great-grandparents, [Great-Grandparents' Names]. I know you might have some stories or documents that could shed light on their lives. If you have any old photos, letters, or family anecdotes, I would greatly appreciate it if you could share them with me.

Additionally, I've encountered a few gaps in our family tree and would love to know if you have any details about [Specific Ancestor] or their siblings that could help fill in these blanks.

Thank you so much for your time and any information you can provide. I'm really looking forward to piecing together more of our family history and would be delighted to share my findings with you as well.

Best regards,

[Your Name]

Example Email 2: Clarifying Family Stories

Prompt:

I'm drafting an email to my cousin to ask for their insights on some family stories related to our genealogy research. I remember them mentioning that [Specific Family Member] was involved in [Specific Detail or Event], and I need more details or clarification about this. Additionally, I would like to ask them if they know anything about [Another Ancestor or Event]. The email should be warm, respectful, and express my appreciation for their help. Can you help me write this?

ChatGPT's Response:

Subject: Family Tree Inquiry – Your Insights Needed!

Dear [Cousin's Name],

I hope all is well with you. I've been exploring our family's genealogy and am reaching out to get some insights from you.

I recently came across a few stories about [Specific Family Member] that I'm trying to verify. I remember you mentioning that [Family Member's] story involved [Specific Detail or Event]. Could you provide any more details or clarify this story for me? It would be really helpful to understand this part of our family history better.

Also, if you have any knowledge about [Another Ancestor or Event], it would be wonderful to hear more about it. Your perspective and any additional information you can share would be invaluable to my research.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

Additional Tips for Using These Prompts

Include Specific Details

When using these prompts, ensure you replace placeholders like [Great-Grandparents' Names], [Specific Ancestor], [Family Member], and [Another Ancestor or Event] with actual names and details relevant to your research. This will make the email more specific and personalized.

Adjust the Tone

You can adjust the tone by specifying if you want it to be more formal or casual, depending on your relationship with your cousin.

Review and Edit

After generating the draft with ChatGPT, review it to ensure it captures your personal voice and the nuances of your request.

These prompts should help ChatGPT provide you with a well-structured and effective email draft for your genealogical inquiries.

Part 4: Using ChatGPT to Create Research Logs and Set Goals

In Part 4 of this series, we will cover how ChatGPT can help you track your genealogy progress with research logs and setting research goals. Be on the look out for Part 4 in the next May AGS Ezine!

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The Backtracker, Vol. 54, No. 3, Summer 2024*

Beyond the Obituary: Discovering Family History in Funeral Home Records



By Kim Richardson, from Ansearchin' News, Vol. 71, No. 3. Fall 2024

In the journey of tracing family history, genealogists often encounter "brick walls"—those frustrating dead ends where documentation and records seem to disappear. When those roadblocks appear, other avenues may hold the answers.

One such way around a brick wall is using funeral home records for genealogy research. As a bonus to solving a brick wall, they can also offer tiny details about an ancestor that show their values, personality, and outlook on life. When used well, funeral home records are helpful for filling in gaps and providing facts that might not be available elsewhere. These often-overlooked records are well worth pursuing.

Why Funeral Home Records Are Important

Funeral home records are full of information that genealogists find interesting and helpful. Firstly, because these records are created by a third-party source—the funeral home—they may include information not found in other types of records, such as government documents or church registers. Secondly, these records often have details that can lead to more hints, clues, and research.

Funeral records work best in research when used with purpose. With a little awareness and thought ahead of time, the results will be better. Instead of “just reading through” the records, make it a priority to use them in these three ways for the biggest outcome:

- **Fill in gaps:** Details like who led the service, the pallbearers, and who attended can be found. This information can lead to finding the deceased's social circles, friends, neighbors, unknown relatives, and community relationships. By then researching these new leads and people, more information about the deceased and family connections can be found. This approach rounds out the research for a family tree and enriches the stories of the people in it.
- **Cross-reference other records:** Because an independent business created the records, it offers an opportunity to compare the information to facts already found in research. This can include census data, birth and death certificates, marriage records, and church registers. By comparing details across multiple sources, a more accurate family history can be constructed.
- **Find small details to get to know the ancestor:** Special requests or arrangements made for the funeral can offer insights into the deceased's personal preferences and relationships. Funeral home records also shed light on burial customs and cultural traditions of the time, offering clues to investigate about an ancestor's life to learn what influenced them and what their values may have been.

Tips for Finding Funeral Home Records

Not sure where to find funeral home records? These five tips can help locate them.

Tip 1: Look for obituaries first. An obituary is often a good starting point for locating funeral home records. Obituaries frequently mention the funeral home that handled the services, providing a direct lead.

Tip 2: Use death certificates to locate the funeral home. A death certificate often includes the name of the funeral home that handled the arrangements. This may be listed as the undertaker. If it is a person's name instead of the name of a funeral home, check to see if that person may have been the owner of a funeral home or a manager or such. Researchers can then reach out directly to the funeral home to request records or further information.

Tip 3: Explore local societies and libraries. Local genealogical and historical societies and libraries often maintain archives of funeral home records. Sometimes, long-established funeral homes that served the community for many years entrust local societies to preserve the records for future generations to use.

In addition to knowing where the records are, local historians can sometimes provide guidance about which funeral home was most likely used by the family. Those historians know the area and people well and may know which funeral home was most convenient to the residence of the family. Or they may know or remember that family's choice of funeral homes for other deaths and can offer that as a lead. This is often true in smaller locales where the deceased's family was well-established. It is well worth the time to ask.

Tip 4: Reach out to local funeral homes. In addition to the information learned from the local historical or genealogical society, look for a city directory for the area and time frame of the death. Use the directory to find funeral homes that were operating at the time of the death. Find out which are still in operation. If any of them are not, they may have been bought by a funeral home that is in business today. From that list, contact the funeral homes directly.

Many funeral homes keep detailed records and may be willing to share information, especially if the request is made respectfully. When reaching out, provide as much information as possible about the deceased, including full name, date of death, and any known family details. This can help the funeral home staff locate the relevant records more efficiently. Additionally, specialized databases like the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) online directory can provide leads as well.

Funeral home records are frequently missed but incredibly valuable resource. They provide detailed information that can help fill in gaps, support other research, and offer unique insights into an ancestor's life and relationships. By using these records, genealogists can unlock new discoveries and construct a more complete and accurate family history.

Arkansas Genealogical Society
April 2025
Kitchen Roundtable Talk



Exploring the FamilySearch Library

Our Zoom discussion will be presented on **Tuesday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m.** It is free of charge.

We are excited to welcome **Debbie Gurtler AG**, Assistant Director at the FamilySearch Library. Debbie will familiarize us with the resources and options available to us, both online and on-site at the Salt Lake City location. This is a rare opportunity to gain knowledge and ask questions regarding one of the premier genealogical research libraries in the U.S. and meet the remarkable lady who oversees this domain!

During her employment at the Library, Debbie Gurtler has managed the Latin America, International, and Simplified Learning teams. Prior to this new assignment, she was the manager of the Latin American, and German and Slavic combined teams. As the FSL training coordinator, she oversees the training for volunteer staff.

Gurtler holds five Accredited Genealogist (AG) credentials with ICAPGenSM. Accreditation shows competency in genealogical research for various specialties. Debbie is accredited in research in the United States Mid-south region, Spain, Mexico, Portugal, and Chile.

She graduated with high honors from Brigham Young University in 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Family History and Genealogy. After working for two research firms, she was hired at the FamilySearch Library in 2011 as a Latin America research specialist. She became fluent in Spanish while living in Chile with her family. Debbie has taken research trips in the United States, Portugal, and Spain and is a popular presenter.

[Join us online via Zoom.](#)

Our monthly **Kitchen Roundtable Talks** cover diverse genealogical topics and methodologies, sparking lively online discussions among our engaged participants. This platform is a unique opportunity to establish meaningful connections with fellow genealogy enthusiasts, cultivate new friendships within the community, and link up with kindred spirits who share our passion for research.

We enthusiastically welcome suggestions from all participants for topics of interest and encourage volunteers to step forward as discussion leaders for subjects close to their hearts. As this initiative evolves, we anticipate refining it based on our collective experiences. Your active participation and invaluable feedback remain pivotal in shaping the future of our endeavors. For more information on our discussion topics, go to argensoc.org/kitchen.

So, You Have Arkansas Roots?

*Look out for your copy of the Spring Edition of our quarterly publication **The Arkansas Family Historian**. This resource is available to our members and is invaluable in Arkansas genealogical and family research.*

Do you have Arkansas family history? Want to share your findings? Send an email to AFH@ArGenSoc.org.

AGS Ezine Administrative Staff

Contributions: If you have news for the Ezine, send it to ezine@argensoc.org.

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