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## Cranberry Genealogy Club

### Annual Report 2024

Providing quality programming for our Cranberry Genealogy Club members and the wider genealogical community has become a benchmark of our organization. We have had a successful year of learning about ways to enhance our genealogical research to best preserve family history, whether in writing, through photography, or by creating projects to share. Our programming committee has utilized members and genealogists for fascinating program topics and local experts from the Detre Library and Archives of the Heinz History Center and from the Pennsylvania State Archives to highlight archival record access. We continue to gain members by opening monthly programs to the general public while focusing steadfastly upon the learning needs of our members. Your input for future program topics or speakers is always welcome.

An unofficial theme of the past year may have been learning about repositories. During the pandemic years, online genealogy flourished as most repositories were closed. Once reopened, repositories kept minimal hours for in-person research. Members have shared about visits to local sites across the state, regional archives, the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City, and even some international locations. Each return and share their experiences for others. As we approach the new year, there is a resurgence of opportunities to visit a repository with ancestral records in order to glean new details for our genealogy. In the past year, we have continued to see a multitude of newly digitized and indexed record collections emerging within online databases. Digging through previously unavailable historic records is rewarding.

Several members stepped in this year to help to lead our organization, bringing fresh ideas and dedicating their help to serve our membership. Members-only events allow for networking about brick walls within our research and how to overcome them as well as chances to share specific knowledge within small group settings. One goal for 2025 is to continue offering SIGs (Special Interest Groups) for our members to explore a topic in-depth for one, two, or more sessions. These all are led by members, and there are many ways additional members can offer to help us learn more about genealogical research. The Cranberry Genealogy Club continues to collaborate with the Cranberry Township FamilySearch Center, the Cranberry Public Library, and other local entities as time or opportunity allows; we continue our international partnership with the ABC Family History Association of Northern Ireland to exchange great ideas. We are grateful for these dynamic partnerships.



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Although conducting genealogical research is most naturally a solitary pursuit, the CranGenClub is committed to fostering ways for members to work together and to learn the best practices for success. Learning about resources and how to access them is a key. During 2025, this will be reflected by our programming options. In addition, the theme for the monthly mini-lessons during Genea-Break will be to discover a website and a book for immediate use with one's genealogical research journey. Thank you for your continued membership in the Cranberry Genealogy Club, Cranberry Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania! By providing opportunities to learn about genealogical research and to connect through our interest in family history, we can best preserve our heritage.

Sue Ennis

President, Cranberry Genealogy Club

## ANNUAL MEETING

The annual officer's meeting took place over Zoom on October 26, 2024. All current officers agreed to serve again in 2025. A brief treasurer's report and a membership report were presented and are summarized at the end of this report. The Club will be starting 2025 in the black with ninety-two members. Thanks to Patty and Judy (and Pat) who found and scheduled excellent speakers for the year. Some speakers are already scheduled for next year and it was suggested that we consider looking at a potential three year schedule with a variety of topics and speakers, including on ethnicity and immigration.

Other business/discussion included:

- Adding Pat Purifoy to the Club bank account as she gets deposits from new members;
- Asking Ron Morton or another member to maintain the Club website to take some work off Debbie Billeter (Ron currently does a newsletter index);
- Sue Ennis observed that approximately sixty-five percent of our members are active for at least fifty percent of our events;
- A potential trip to the Pennsylvania Archives in the Spring;
- Asking the program committee to look into the feasibility of moving the annual picnic to another month as July and August can be very hot and prone to thunderstorms;
- Adding the meeting minutes to the Google Drive; and,
- Donating a book to the Cranberry Library each year in memorial of a member who passes away during the year and donating a book even if no one passes.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS IN 2024

January: Deciphering Deeds in Western PA - Margaret Hewitt, Manager of Reference Services, Detre Library and Archives, Heinz History Center. Margaret presented practical presentation along with some "hands on" examples for finding and interpreting deeds.

February: Fire Insurance Maps - The Google Maps of Their Day - Professional genealogist Jill Morelli gave an excellent and informative presentation on the history and use of fire insurance maps.

March: Using Fold3 Library Edition - Debra Dudek, Head of Adult and Teen Learning Services at Fountaindale Public Library District located in Bolingbrook, Illinois gave an excellent presentation demonstrating what Fold3 is, how it works and how to navigate the site.

April: Getting to Know the Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library - Allison Deprey Singleton, Genealogy Services Manager at the library, gave an excellent and informative presentation on what is available and how to use the genealogical records and collections at the Allen County Public Library (ACPL) located in Fort Wayne, Indiana.



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May: Tour the County Courthouse of Your Ancestors - Denyse Allen, founder of PA Ancestors, LLC. Denyse is a professional genealogist and author who specializes in Pennsylvania records and gave an engaging presentation on how to research county courthouse records.

May: Preparing to Travel Near and Far for Genealogical Research – This was a special Saturday co-presentation and discussion with our Northern Ireland partner group, ABC Family History Association along with Rich Watson and Sharon Cimoch from the Cranberry Genealogy Club. There was a good exchange of ideas about traveling in Ireland and Europe as well as traveling in the U.S., particularly Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C.

June: Western Pennsylvania “What’s in a Name” - On June 26, 2024 Steve Cicero, aka the History Hobo, presented a slideshow on how many Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania locations historical significance got their names.

June: Family Tree Maker 2024 - Mark Olsen and Duff Wilson of Family Tree Maker presented information on user groups and the updated 2024 version of Family Tree Maker. The in-person meeting took place at the LDS Family History Center on Rochester Road. This was a bonus presentation for the month offered by Family Tree Maker.

July: American Ending - Author Mary Kay Zuravleff discussed the family history and documents she used as the historical underpinnings of her novel, *American Ending*.

August: No meeting, picnic was a good chance to just meet and mingle outside the more formal meetings.

September: How to Write Ancestral Stories Your Relatives Will Want to Read - Pam Vestal of Generations Genealogy, gave an informative and useful presentation on how to pique your relative’s interest in your hard won research.

October: Do I Have to Go? Navigating the Pennsylvania State Archive Catalog and Digital Collections - Aaron McWilliams, Head of Public Services Section for the Pennsylvania State Archives gave an informative presentation on what is in the PA Archives as well as how to access the collections digitally and in person.

November: Photo Preservation & Storage - Dana Palmer, a Certified Genealogist and Certified Genealogical Lecturer gave an excellent and informative presentation on how to preserve and store photos especially for genealogy lovers.



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## **MEMBER BENEFITS AND EVENTS**

We continue to host monthly sessions of Geneabreak, members-only virtual sessions with a brief lesson and discussion afterward. This year, we focused different types of records important to genealogical research, including birth records, death records, census records and church records.

Ron Morton contributed his expertise by presenting several sessions of a Special Interest Group workshop on the use of Family Tree Maker.

Brick Walls & Bagels continues on the first Saturday of each month with members gathering at Giant Eagle in the Cranberry Mall. The location was changed from Panera Bread because Panera does not open until nine AM on Saturdays while members meet at 8AM. The Cranberry Genealogy Club Newsletters continue to be published several times per year for members. The newsletters include information about meetings and events of the Cranberry Genealogy Club as well as events throughout southwestern Pennsylvania. How-to articles, tech tips, book reviews are regular features in the newsletters.

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

The Club's January through December 2024 membership year enjoyed a gain of twenty-three new members for a 2024 total of ninety-two, which includes four honorary members.

Out-of-state membership increased from six in 2023 to ten in 2024 and includes Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, Virginia, Wisconsin and two from Ohio. The club has two international members.

Eleven 2023 members did not renew in 2024.

## **TREASURY REPORT**

At the annual officer's meeting held in October the checkbook register was reviewed and it was noted that there is a healthy balance so the Club will be starting 2025 in the black. The Club paid a total of \$925 for speakers this year. A fiscal report detailing income and expenses will be created in January.