

## □ Family tree research

explore books. "I was able to visit my grandparents' village in Poland over the past three or four years and I just wanted to do follow up on some research."

Kuczynski doesn't have too many living relatives to gather information from but he will start his research with his grandparents' birth certificates.

Those looking to explore their lineage can seek out the Southington Genealogical Society or their local libraries for assistance.

"There's lots of things that can help, but you need to start with yourself, then parents and work your way back," Dailey said. At this point researching can become confusing, according to Dailey. She said researchers need to decide where they want to go, if they want to concentrate on their paternal side or maternal side. Once a direction is chosen, birth and death certificates can be obtained as primary sources from town halls. Obituaries, although secondary sources, can provide much information and lead to other findings, Dailey said. The death briefing can tell researchers about that person's family members, schooling and career.

There is a small glitch to the

obtaining process. Birth certificates can only be obtained by a genealogical society member. Members pay a \$10 fee to belong to the club and once authorized by the state, they are given a blue card. This blue card is a person's gateway to vital records. The card is needed only if the birth certificate being asked for is less than 100 years old, anything older can be acquired without the card, according to Smith.

Cheshire, Meriden, Wallingford and Southington libraries all have in-house subscriptions to ancestry.com. The Web site is free to use for library patrons. Access to the U.S. Census, available online, is also useful when tracking down relatives, according to Franco. She said some the census for some years is better than others.

"In the 1800s people listed the month and year they were born and the occupation they had," Franco said.

Franco also suggested using findagrave.com, a Web site that documents people and their cemetery headstones, to locate deceased family members.

Judy Mosher, a Waterbury resident, also attended the ancestry.com discussion at the Cheshire library. She has been actively researching her

mother's family history after her mother died 10 years ago.

"My kids don't know her," Mosher said. She said she wants to do the research so her children can get a glimpse of their late grandmother's life.

Mosher's cousin did a family tree on her father's side, which has acted as guide for her and her mother's investigations. Mosher has also talked with her mother's friends and family members and has made some fascinating findings.

Mosher discovered that three women in her family conceived a child out of wedlock and because the act was looked down upon, when the child was born he or she was raised by a different family member.

"My mom's aunt raised her sister," said Mosher, who made other discoveries as well.

"I think it's like unraveling a mystery," said Bill Basel, a reference librarian at the Cheshire Public Library. "It's neat to find the skeletons in the closet. People can do a detective search on their own. After looking a long time for a record, it feels good to find it."

Basel said researchers just need to keep plugging away and be patient.

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# Getting to the root of the family tree

## The Internet is a good place to start researching your family's background

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Everyone has a family lineage, a line of descendants tracing back to a particular ancestor, but does everyone know exactly who and what it entails? The television series on PBS, "Faces of America," and NBC's "Who Do You Think You Are?" highlighted the journey many celebrities took to learn about the lives of their ancestors. Such shows demonstrate what many average people enjoy doing on a daily basis: researching family background and digging deep into their genealogy.

Deanna Dailey, president of the Southington Genealogical Society, was always intrigued by the stories her grandmother and great grandmother told. Over the years Dailey, 43, collected papers and historical documents on her family but never really got organized until four years ago when she attended her first Southington Genealogical Society meeting.

Since then Dailey has become president of the 80-member group, which meets once a month to discuss findings. Guest speakers also share information on many topics, including ethnic backgrounds, research techniques, handwriting and more.

Dailey as well as Jan Franco, local history librarian at Meriden Public Library, believe the recent television shows sparked an interest in the public. Franco has been getting many referrals and providing help to curious patrons about ways to look up their family background.

"Ancestry.com is inundated with people," Dailey said. The genealogical Web site has been backlogged, according to Dailey.

Because the site has been deemed helpful and useful, the Cheshire Public Library held an hour-long tutorial on how to use ancestry.com.

Nora Galvin, professional genealogist, explained to her approximately 40-person



Above: Wallingford resident Kate Boyd, left, and her son, Luke, 22, search on ancestry.com. The Boyds learned how to use the Web site Tuesday during a workshop conducted by instructor Nora Galvin at the Cheshire Public Library (seen at right giving a presentation).



Photos by Rob Beecher / Record-Journal

crowd that ancestry.com is a Web site consisting of 4 billion to 5 billion factoids compiled from government records, books and newspapers.

"You can use member information as a hint, but don't ever think it's true," Galvin said. Many members of the Web site document their own stories and family trees, which could be helpful to other researchers, but Galvin encouraged the crowd to find authentic documentation. "Prove it to yourself that it's true. Just because it's written down doesn't mean it's true," she said.

Although the television networks have created a buzz, researching family background is nothing new.

"People want to know where their family came from," said Mel Smith, reference librarian at the Connecticut State Library. He believes the search for family history is a roots thing. "It's more than just a list of dates; people want to connect family members to something in history."

Finding out a relative fought in the Battle of Gettysburg just makes history so much more exciting, Dailey said about her own family history. It helps the young generation get interested, she added, they'll get more involved and ask more questions.

People are also interested in making DNA connections, according to Nancy Thurrott, librarian at the Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown, a library that specializes in family history and genealogy. Looking up family history allows researchers to see what diseases run in which side of the family. Medical history can be tracked and preventative care can take place.

Leo Kuczynski, a Cheshire resident, has just begun his family tree research.

"It's new to me," said Kuczynski, who attended the Cheshire library's presentation on ancestry.com. He has done online research but has yet to