



Manatee Genealogical Society News

October 2026

Quick View Calendar:

Monthly Meetings – Tuesday, 10:00 AM ET.
Virtual and in-person at the Manatee Central Public Library. Advance registration required for virtual attendance.

November 10th – Peggy Jude – ***“Every Word Matters: Finding Ancestors Through Full-Text Search”***

December 1st – Karen A. Fortin – ***“Sharing Ancestor Stories: Writing Brief Biographical Sketches”***

January 5th – Peg Kapustiak – ***“Farmers & Agriculture in the USA & Across the World: How to Locate”***

NOVEMBER MEETING

***“Every Word Matters:
Finding Ancestors
Through Full-Text
Search”***



Join us on Tuesday, November 10, 2026, as our own Peggy Jude, a nationally-known speaker and researcher, discusses the new opportunities to find ancestors, family stories, and local history references buried within millions of digitized records using full-text search. Come and explore the major genealogy websites offering full-text search and how to search them effectively to break through research brick walls.

Mark your Calendars!

Our annual seminar is scheduled for January 23, 2027. The presenters lined up are Judy Russell, Lisa Medina, Debra Abbott, Peggy Jude, Suzanne Hoffman, and Mark Thompson. Presentation topics and additional details will be available soon.



A message from our President:

October is here, bringing cooler weather and renewed energy to our Society.

The first meeting of the Beginner's SIG was held on October 3, with a very good turnout. It was wonderful to see so much interest, and we hope even more beginning genealogists will join us in the coming months. This group offers a welcoming place to ask questions, learn essential research skills, and share discoveries with others who are beginning their genealogy journeys.

The New England SIG will debut on October 19 at 4:00 p.m. This group will bring together members researching ancestors from the New England states. Please keep an eye out for the Zoom link and plan to join us!

Our Brick Wall SIG will offer members an opportunity to share difficult research problems, exchange ideas, and explore possible solutions together. Sometimes a fresh set of eyes—or a suggestion from another researcher—is just what we need to break through a stubborn brick wall.

Planning is also underway for our annual seminar, scheduled for Saturday, January 23, 2027. We are excited about the program being developed and look forward to sharing more information in next month's newsletter. For now, please save the date!

Thank you for your continued participation and support of the Manatee Genealogical Society. Your enthusiasm and willingness to

share your knowledge help make our Society a welcoming and valuable resource for genealogists of every experience level.

Happy researching!

Karen Dwyer
President

Special Interest Groups

*All meetings are virtual and held monthly.
Free and open to all.*

DNA SIG – the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm ET

Irish SIG – the second Tuesday – rotating monthly between 2:00 pm ET and 7:00 pm ET

German SIG – the second Wednesday at 10:00 am ET

Mid-Atlantic Pre-Civil War SIG – the third Wednesday at 10:00 am ET

Polish SIG – the first Wednesday at 10:00 am ET

Technology for Genealogy SIG – the second Monday at 2:00 pm ET.

[NEW!] **New England Pre-1900 SIG** – the third Monday at 4:00 pm ET, beginning October 19.

[NEW!] **Beginners SIG** – the first Saturday at 9:30 am ET.

[NEW!] **Brick Wall SIG** – planned to commence in October. More information coming soon.

About the Society

Manatee Genealogical Society

Website:

www.mgsfl.org

Email:

info@mgsfl.org

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/ManateeGenealogicalSociety/>

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1194, Bradenton, FL 34206

Monthly Meeting Location:

Manatee Central Library
1301 Barcarrota Boulevard West,
Bradenton, FL 34205

Finding Your People: A Beginner's Guide to Navigating Your AncestryDNA Match List

by Peggy Jude

You took the test. You got your results. You clicked on "DNA Matches" and then... froze. Hundreds, maybe thousands of names staring back at you, most of them strangers. Sound familiar?

Here's the good news: your match list isn't as overwhelming as it looks. Once you know how to search, sort, and filter, it becomes one of the most powerful tools in your genealogy toolkit.

What Is a DNA Match List, Anyway?

Your match list is a ranked list of people who share segments of DNA with you. You're likely related to every single person on it. Ancestry sorts them automatically by the amount of shared DNA, measured in **centimorgans (cM)**. The higher the number, the closer the relationship. Your matches are grouped into categories like Close Matches, Extended Family, and Distant Matches to help you make sense of the range.

Searching: Zeroing In on What Matters

The search bar isn't just for finding a specific person — it's a flexible tool for exploring your match list by the details that matter most to your research.

You can search by:

- **Name** — a match's name or username
- **Surname** — type a family surname and surface matches who have that name somewhere in their linked tree.
- **Location** — search a place name to find matches whose trees include people born in a specific area. This is especially handy when you're focused on a particular region or migration route.

The key thing to understand is that Ancestry is searching *within your matches' linked trees*, not the entire Ancestry database. So, the more family trees your matches have attached, and the fuller those trees are, the more useful your searches will be.

Sorting: Changing Your View

By default, Ancestry sorts your matches from highest to lowest shared DNA—closest relatives first. But you can also sort by:

- **Newest matches** — useful for spotting recently added testers
- **Unviewed matches** — helps you work through matches you haven't looked at yet

For most beginners, sticking with the default (highest shared DNA first) is the best starting point. Focus on your top matches before diving into the distant ones.

Filtering: Narrowing the Field

This is where things get really useful. Ancestry's filters let you slice your match list in powerful ways:

- **Common Ancestors** — shows matches where Ancestry has identified a likely shared ancestor by working through a network of connected family trees, yours, your match's, and others linked through the system. It's not just a direct tree-to-tree comparison; Ancestry builds the connection through multiple trees to surface the most probable common ancestor. Think of it as Ancestry doing some of the detective work for you.

- **Unviewed** — filters to matches you haven't opened yet
- **Notes** — shows only matches where you've already added a note (great for tracking your research).
- **Groups** — if you've color-coded your matches by family line, you can filter to see just one group at a time. (More on this next month.)

You can combine filters to get even more specific. Looking for unviewed matches who share a common ancestor with you? Just check both boxes.

A Simple Strategy to Get Started

Don't try to work through your entire match list at once—that's a recipe for frustration. Instead:

1. Start with your **top matches**
2. Check if they have a family tree attached
3. Look for surnames or locations you recognize
4. Add a **note** to any match that you examine, especially if the tree is all private to prevent reworking the same match over and over again.

Your match list is a living, growing resource. New matches are added regularly as more people test. The goal isn't to figure out every match. It's to build a working understanding of your closest connections and go from there.

Bottom line: Searching helps you find people you already know. Sorting helps you prioritize. Filtering helps you focus. Together, these three tools turn an overwhelming list into a manageable research project.

Regional events of interest:

11 October, Sunday @ 2:00 PM, Jewish Genealogical Society of Tampa Bay

What Genealogists Need to Know about Ancestral Names, presented by Drew Smith

15 October, Thursday, @ 10:00 AM, Lee County Genealogical Society

Your Ancestor's FAN Club: Using Cluster Research to Get Past Brick Walls, presented by Drew Smith

17 October, Saturday @ 11:00 AM, Pinellas Genealogical Society

Running a Profitable Life Story or Genealogy Business, presented by Rhonda Lauritzen

24 October, Saturday, @ 1:00 PM, Suncoast Genealogy Society

SGS Fall Mini-Seminar (\$10 members, \$25 non-members), see <https://sgsfl.com/>

28 October, Wednesday, Englewood Genealogical Society

Starting or Restarting Your Genealogy & Family History Research (@ 10:30 AM) and ***Genealogy Research Using My Heritage*** (@ 1:30 PM), presented by Sue Carlson & Pam Schierberg (bring your questions and computers)

Share Your Story in the Member Spotlight!

Have you been enjoying our regular "Member Spotlight" column? It's a wonderful way for us to get to know one another, discover shared interests, and perhaps even find new research connections across common lines.

We would love to feature your story! If you'd like to be included in an upcoming issue, please send a brief email to Marksteinke51@gmail.com, and we will send you a short questionnaire to fill out. Thank you for helping us highlight the great community we have here!

Member Spotlight:

This month we meet board member Julie Howland.



Name & Current Residence

Julie Howland, I live in Bradenton

Where are you from?

I grew up in Hutchinson, KS, and have lived in CO and TX as

well as Florida

How long have you been researching your family history?

In the 90's my Dad gave me a biography of my Great Grandmother which piqued my interest. I began seriously after I retired.

What surnames or family lines are you currently researching?

Dufek, Klufa, Elvrum, Jones, Maktin, Oldfield, Carpenter, Eby, McGuire, Howland

What locations are your ancestors from?

Bohemia, Moravia, Norway, England, Scotland

What is your primary genealogical research focus right now?

Have been trying to research my matrilineal line

What is one brick wall or key question you are currently working on?

I have been trying to discover the parents of Allen Enos Jones (1764-1840) for years.

What has been your most exciting or meaningful genealogical discovery so far?

My most meaningful discovery has been a trip to the Czech Republic and visiting the ancestral home of my Great Grandmother.

What tools, websites, or resources do you use most often?

Family Search, FTDNA, Actapublica, Digitalarkivet, Ancestry

What advice would you give a new genealogist just getting started?

Create a timeline, do cluster research, study the history and geography of the place

Membership Corner

Welcome to our newest members:

- Dana Berson, Bradenton, FL

Is your membership up for renewal soon?

Please renew by going to our website at:

<https://mgsfl.org/cpage.php?pt=13>

Membership is only \$20 per year and helps support our society.

REASONS TO BECOME A MEMBER:

- Your membership helps in the financial support of programs, speakers and society activities.
- Monthly meetings featuring guest lecturers discussing current genealogy and family history topics.
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs) designed to assist members with their genealogy research and education.
- Access to the "Members Only" section on our website featuring MGS publications, access to Member Forums, and society documents.
- Surname Database - Members can enter as much surname information into our surname database as they wish.
- Discounted pricing for Special Events.
- Email reminders of upcoming programs and events

How long have you been a member of our society?

Since 2016

What do you enjoy most about being a member of our society?

I enjoy attending the in person meetings and working with the Committee to select speakers for our meetings.