

# Ancestry

The Family History Source from *Ancestry.com*

**Extra! Extra!**  
**The Scoop on**  
**Newspapers**

**Honoring Your**  
**Ancestors**

**Fun Projects with the**  
**Latest Gadgets**

**The Story Behind**  
**a Best-seller**





# Contents



## Features

### 16 **The Ins and Outs of Newspaper Research**

If you've searched old newspapers before, you know the potential—and the challenges—they hold. Here are tips to successful newspaper searches.

*by Linda Herrick Swisher*

[Historical Newspapers Online at Ancestry.com](#)

*by Esther Yu*

### 23 **Computer Peripherals for the Family Historian**

Digital cameras and camcorders, scanners, and PDAs are just a few of the computer peripherals family historians are anxious to get their hands on.

*by David Ouimette*

### 28 **Cane River: From Oral History to Best-seller**

For first-time author Lalita Tademy, finding and learning the stories of her female forebears was a project that started with curiosity and ended with a best-selling novel.

*by Barbara Krasner-Khait*

### 34 **Honoring Your Ancestors**

With these three heartwarming stories, you'll find new and creative ways to pay tribute to your ancestors.

*by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak*



On the cover: Tatty Newsboy/Lambert/Hulton/Archive



# Honoring Our Ancestors

BY MEGAN SMOLENYAK SMOLENYAK

---

**W**e all know what a slippery slope genealogy is. Perhaps it began with innocent dabbling, trying to assemble enough information to craft a heritage album for Mom and Dad's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Or maybe one of our children came home with a school or scouting assignment to construct a family tree. Then there are those of us who did a vanity search on our surname during our first surfing expedition on the Internet, only to be startled with all the hits. Whatever the trigger event, millions of us are quickly pulled into the wonderful world of genealogy, never to come up for air again!

And once you get to know some of your ancestors through the photos and paper trail they left behind, you almost inevitably develop a sense of connectedness to them. So it's a natural progression to move from researching your ancestors to paying tribute to them.

Many of us choose fairly conventional paths, such as writing a family history or arranging reunions for the descendants of particular forebears. These tried and true approaches are becoming increasingly popular—and for good reason. They help us reach out to others and ensure that the memory of our ancestors will survive even after we are gone.

But more and more of us are opting for somewhat unexpected means of honoring our ancestors. Curious about this quiet phenomenon, I decided to delve into this world of ancestral tribute and was rewarded with countless examples that demonstrate our endless well of creativity, a few of which I'd like to share here.

Exploring these tributes, I quickly realized that there is no “right” way to honor our ancestors, but rather, as many approaches as there are people with an inclination to do so. For instance, who would have ever thought of centering a family tradition on a diaper? Fortunately for James H. Culbert of Virginia, his great-grandparents did and he continues the custom today.

## POSTERITY FOR POSTERIOBS

—James H. Culbert

Many families have traditions and heirlooms they pass down through the generations—tall tales, jewelry, reunions, Bibles, and the like. In the Freas family, we’ve created a tradition and heirloom of an unexpected sort: a diaper.

To date, four generations of Freas descendants have had their pictures taken at the age of six months wearing the same cloth diaper.

No one in our family knows exactly how or why this tradition was started, but we intend to keep it going. It serves as a reminder of our heritage, helps us bond with our ancestors, and gives the now dispersed Freas descendants a reason to stay in touch with each other.

The originators of this tradition were both born in Pennsylvania. Frank Dudley Freas was born in 1868 in Hazleton, the fourth child of Dr. Henry Leigh Freas and his wife Amelia Gearhart Messenger Freas. Accounts of the Freas family in the late 1800s indicate that the family had a flair for the dramatic. Frank’s oldest brother, Mordecai, was a magician known as the “Great Voxie,” and Frank himself studied for the stage in Philadelphia following his graduation from Berwick High School in 1885.

It was in Philadelphia that Frank met Mary Agnes Sheahan. The story, as related to me by my great-aunt Jane Freas, is that Frank came to the Sheahan home to pick up the oldest Sheahan daughter for a date, but was smitten instead with Mary. Two years younger than Frank, Mary had intended to enter a convent, but changed her mind

after making his acquaintance. She eventually convinced her somewhat reluctant parents to allow her to marry him, and Frank wed his “Irish rose” in Camden, New Jersey, in May 1889.

In November of that year, Frank and Mary experienced the sorrow of losing their firstborn, a premature infant who survived a mere ten weeks. Their second child, Agnes (my grandmother-to-be), followed in June 1891. Perhaps it was the joy of seeing Agnes thrive that caused her parents to celebrate the arrival of the six-month anniversary of her birth by having a photograph taken of her wearing only a diaper. Unbeknownst to them, the seed of a tradition had been planted.

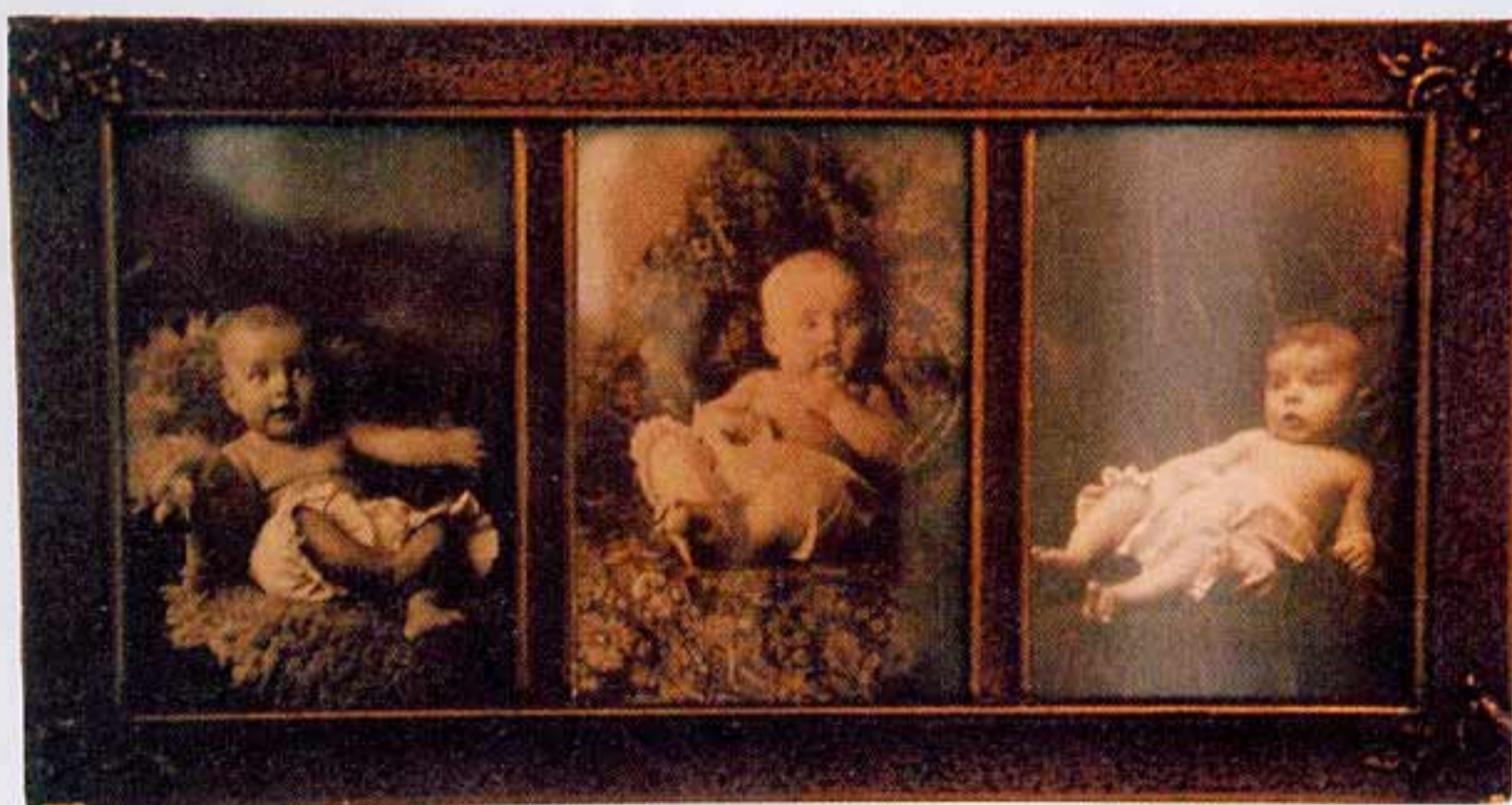
Frank and Mary subsequently had similar pictures taken of each of their other four children—all in the same diaper and all at the age of six months. This collection of five photographs was later mounted together and shows the diapered derrières of Agnes Amelia Freas (born 1891), Lois Gearhart Freas (born 1896), Betty Viola Freas (born 1899), Henry Leigh Freas (born 1901), and Jane Kitchen Freas

(born 1904). Apparently by the birth of the second child, the diaper had already been retired from its customary purpose and retained just for the use of these half-year milestone photos.

You might think that the diaper would have been misplaced during the fifteen-year dormant phase following the births in this first generation, but not in the Freas family!

In 1919 when the first grandchild of Frank and Mary was born to their daughter Agnes and her husband, Thomas Hale Keiser, the peculiar family habit was resurrected. They also mounted their Freas diaper shots together, but with a two-generation twist: the frame contains photos of the Agnes Amelia Freas—the baby first photographed in 1891—and both of her children, Thomas Hale Keiser, Jr. and Mary Lois Keiser.

Still more Freas babies had their charms captured for posterity. Betty Jane Stahl, the only child of Leo Stahl and Lois Gearhart Freas Stahl, and Nancy Jane Waters, the only child of Frank Waters and Betty Viola Freas Waters, were next in line.



My generation made its contribution when my parents, Walter Maurice Culbert and Mary Lois Keiser Culbert, used the sexagenarian diaper to photograph their 1950s crop of Freas children: James Hale Culbert, Elizabeth Leigh Culbert, and Daniel Freas Culbert.

More recently, my wife, Kathleen Marie Mahoney Culbert, and I have kept the tradition alive with our own late-1980s trio of daughters and, of course, the durable Freas diaper. Clarissa Janes Culbert and twins Lorelee Cummins Culbert and Annalisa Mahoney Culbert were the fourth generation photographed in the by then nearly century-old diaper.

Incidentally, while I have detailed the diaper's journey down my own direct line, I should point out that it is well-traveled, having crossed various state lines to grace the assets of various other sibling and collateral lines of Freas descendants.

The original framed photos of the children of Frank and Mary Freas were passed down to their youngest child, Jane. When Jane died, I was fortunate enough to receive them. I assembled them with the three more recent generations, and the four frames now hang together at my house as a constant reminder of the strength of family tradition, even if it is in the unconventional form of "diaper duty."

The Freas family developed their charming tradition almost accidentally over a span of multiple generations, but Richard OhEigeartaigh of Massachusetts very deliberately chose an approach that he lives with every day.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

—Richard OhEigeartaigh

How do you pronounce OhÉigeartaigh? If you're not sure, you're not alone. Bonus points to you if you figured out that it's pronounced o-HEG-are-tea, more

commonly recognized as "Hegarty" or "O'Hegarty."

Some twenty-five years ago, I decided to change the spelling of my surname back to the original Gaelic, or as I prefer to call it, Irish. While I didn't have any documented proof of the old spelling in my family, I knew that OhÉigeartaigh was the traditional spelling, which had been used for centuries before English law required the Anglicization of all surnames in Ireland. It wasn't until the Gaelic revival in the 1890s that some families returned to the original spelling of their names, but my family retained the

English version until I decided to reverse history in 1975.

Growing up in Boston with an immigrant father with an IRA past, I naturally absorbed many tales of British injustices in Ireland. My mother was the daughter of Irish immigrants and had raised money for the IRA. While I wasn't raised to be revolutionary or a rebel, I was keenly aware of the hardships my family had endured in the "old country." My father was very insistent that I develop an appreciation for other cultures, perhaps because he knew what it was to live in an environment where one's culture is barely tolerated.

I took my father's advice to heart and majored in Spanish in college, which made me even more eager to learn about other cultures and languages. Not surprisingly, one of the languages I chose to master was Irish. Today I teach Irish classes and am

very pleased that the demand is so strong.

But it was in 1975 that I decided to take the step of resuming use of the original spelling of my name. As a bit of a compromise, I decided not to use the accent mark over the first e in my name since Americans aren't accustomed to dealing with accents.

At the time of my decision, I was married with two children. My children were too young to weigh in with an opinion, but my wife was less than thrilled at the prospect of adopting the thirteen-letter variation of our name. Respecting my wishes, she eventually agreed to the change.



It was my father's opinion, though, that was of greatest concern to me. When my father quietly responded that the "new" spelling was "the way it was supposed to be," my decision was made.

I hired an attorney and went through the usual formalities, placing a notice in the newspaper and filing documentation at the county courthouse. The request was never questioned, and my family and I are now legally OhEigartaigh.

I'm frequently asked whether it's all been worth it. Isn't it a hassle having to constantly spell my name? Isn't it annoying to hear it mispronounced time and time again? Isn't it tedious having to explain that, no, it's not Arabic?

No, I don't think so. A surprising number of people of all ethnic persuasions pronounce it correctly the first time, and after a quarter of a century, I've learned to adapt to any minor inconvenience it might cause. When I travel to Ireland, where many others have reverted to the original spelling of their names, I attract no comment as an American bearing the Irish spelling.

I believe that a name is a label we put on ourselves, and I consider my decision to be like that of many African Americans who use names that reflect their cultural heritage. But I don't see it as a statement and I find it curious that it is so frequently a subject of discussion. Given my awareness of the injustices that first forced my family to shift to the Anglicized Hegarty spelling, though, I suppose it is somewhat appropriate that OhEigartaigh translates to "unjust"—a quiet protest hidden in my name.

Another decision to pay tribute also has its origins in historical events, but of a much more recent nature.

The following eulogy was given by Richard Deuel on 12 January 2002 for his twenty-eight-year-old sister, Cindy Deuel, who was killed in the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. Cindy was an avid genealogist who was passionately seeking her roots up to the day of the disaster, and Richard was her family history partner. She had even dreamed of starting a genealogy business to help people with their own family research.

Richard is commissioning a specially crafted headstone with Cindy's family tree on one side (much of it information she learned through her own efforts) and the Twin Towers on the other. He also chose a particularly meaningful place for her burial.

## 911: ROOTS AND WINGS

—Richard Deuel

I'd like to share with everyone why we chose Cedar Lawn Cemetery for Cindy. It wasn't long ago that Cindy and I stood over this very spot, as we posed for a picture to document the final resting place of our great-great-grandfather, Henry Deuel. Cindy found this spot even though there is no headstone to mark his grave. Many have asked how she was able to find Henry, who was interred here in 1874.

As with everything Cindy did in life, she was fired with an unlimited determination, guided by a passion for a good mystery, and inspired by a love of things historical. Most importantly, she was touched by the lives of the families of those who walked before—those forgotten men, women, and children who paved the path for us. Every time Cindy and I scanned a pre-1900 census record, we knew the thousands of names slowly scrolling by were no longer with us. A respectful sadness makes you want to

know about these people and especially your ancestors.

And the more you learn, the more you want to know. Our great-grandfather, John J. Deuel, was just one of these people. He ran a poolroom and tobacco shop on Main Avenue in Passaic, New Jersey, in the early 1880s. Cindy was scanning the Passaic newspaper for advertisements he had placed when she found an obituary for John's infant son, George. The paper mentioned that George was interred at Cedar Lawn. With one call to Cedar Lawn, Cindy then learned who else was buried with John's son in the same plot. She had found our great-great-grandfather, Henry.

How Cindy loved Henry! We could talk about him for hours on end. Where was Henry from? Who was Henry's father? We would spend hours at the library, looking for

When my father responded that the new spelling was the way it was supposed to be, my decision was made. We went through the usual formalities, and now my family and I are legally OhEigartaigh.

him in census records. I used to buy O'Henry candy bars in the hope that it would bring us luck in finding out about him. I got the biggest kick when I found out that Cindy followed my lead and also started snacking on O'Henrys.

Henry is still a mystery to me, but no longer to Cindy. Along with Henry's grandchild, George, who is buried here, there are twin boys, Henry and John. All three died as infants—like Cindy, long before their time. Cindy is now their guardian angel.

We chose Cedar Lawn because the people Cindy brought back to "life" are buried here, some of whom made it possible for Cindy to come into our lives. Some others here at Cedar Lawn are our great-grandmother, Maggie Deuel, and our grandfather's sister, Annie Deuel, someone my father and his siblings didn't even know about until I discovered her two months ago. (She named one of her sons, of course, Henry John.) Also there is our great-great uncle, Arthur Costantini, who came over from Italy. Also next door at Cavalry Cemetery is Grandpa's first wife, Anna Earle, and his first son, John.

As we stand here above the Deuel plot, I think of Grandpa's three siblings who are buried here. What if Grandpa had been the one who had died as an infant instead of the others? Then most of us might evaporate from this scene. I think of our great-grandmother, Maggie. Both she and her mother had fifteen children. As an old woman, Maggie died a horrible death in a kitchen fire. And then there's Grandpa's first son, John, who died at twenty-two when he fell out of a window.

Cindy understood this rhythm of life, the uncertainty that goes along with it, and was not afraid of anything. I admired that quality about her more than any other. Cindy's favorite movie was *Contact*, with Jodie Foster. In it, the character Jodie Foster plays loses her father as a young girl. She then spends her life searching boundless space for any sounds of life. When she does make contact

and travels to the source, who is in the form of her father, he tells her that we all must take baby steps toward understanding, and that one day it will all make sense. Her father always assured her there was more life out there, because if there weren't, it would be a great waste of space.

One of the last things Cindy asked was if we thought she would ever get to travel in space. I believe that is where she is now, soaring on the wings of comets, exploring strange new worlds and life forms, and truly going where no woman has ever gone before.



## CINDY AND RICHARD'S EXAMPLE

Cindy's life was all too brief. I would much rather share a story by her than about her, but I like to think that we can at least take some solace in knowing that she was able to solve a few family mysteries during her time here and that Richard conceived such an appropriate way of honoring our fellow roots-seeker. Cindy and her contributions will be remembered for generations to come because of Richard's efforts.

And while hers is admittedly an extraordinary situation, wouldn't it be nice if more of our ancestors—remarkable and ordinary alike—were commemorated in some way, the same way Cindy did in seeking out Henry's final resting place? If even one of you reading these words is

inspired to follow the Deuel's example, your actions will also become a part of Cindy's legacy. I can't think of a more fitting tribute. ♡

*Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak shares these and forty-seven other stories of special and unexpected ancestral tributes in her recently released book, Honoring Our Ancestors: Inspiring Stories of the Quest for Our Roots. She can be reached through her website at [www.honoringourancestors.com](http://www.honoringourancestors.com).*