



Genealogical Collection Research Guide

Fort Myers Regional Library

August 5, 2021

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Fort Myers Regional Library genealogy collection is to promote the preservation of family history by:

1. Encouraging patrons of all nationalities and cultures to explore their heritage and celebrate their own place in history.
2. Supporting educational, programming and networking activities of local and regional historical and genealogical societies to develop enthusiasm for family history research.
3. Making national and international genealogical and historical resources available to all patrons through the continued expansion, updating, and use of the collection of print, microform, electronic databases and other resources.

Research Assistance

Patrons seeking research assistance are invited to contact our reference/genealogy librarian Bryan L. Mulcahy. Research assistance is free. Mr. Mulcahy can be reached by telephone at 239-533-4626 or via email at bmulcahy@leegov.com. The timeliest manner to contact Mr. Mulcahy is via email. At the present time due to staff shortages during the summer, appointment requests are limited to the following day and times: Tuesdays from 10-12 and Wednesdays from 1-3. If these hours do not work with your schedule, you are welcome to submit other days of the week and times. Mr. Mulcahy will be in touch with you to discuss options.

The Fort Myers Regional Library accepts research queries and photocopy requests from patrons by telephone, fax, postal mail, or e-mail. Queries received by mail must be accompanied by a business size stamped self-addressed envelope. Queries by e-mail or fax will also require an SASE be mailed to the library unless the sender is satisfied with an electronic response. The second option is to contact the help feature located on the Lee County Genealogical Society website link <http://genhelp@lcgsfl.org>.

NOTE: Fort Myers Regional Library is the only branch that accepts e-mail, telephone, or mailed queries. Any queries sent to other branches or using the “Ask a Librarian” feature on the library website are forwarded to Mr. Mulcahy at Fort Myers Regional Library. Genealogical queries sent by mail should be addressed as follows:

Fort Myers Regional Library
Attention: Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian
2450 First Street
Fort Myers, FL 33901

To obtain assistance with genealogical queries, or reference to an agency that may provide help, patrons must be able to furnish the following information:

1. Full name of the ancestor
2. Where and when an event took place
3. Resources that have already been researched

If you wish to come to the branch to use the databases, especially the enhanced version of Family Search, you may access the genealogy databases from any computer in the building. Access is not limited to just the genealogy room. Please note that our genealogy databases are available on our library homepage link at <https://www.leegov.com/library/adults>.

If you have the names of specific titles of books in the collection and you wish to come to the branch and use them, Please contact Bryan L. Mulcahy at bmulcahy@leegov.com in advance of your visit. I'll arrange to pull the items and have them waiting at the 2nd floor reference desk.

Hours of Operation

The Fort Myers Regional Library is located at 2450 First Street in downtown Fort Myers. The genealogy collection is housed in the Genealogy Room, part of the 2nd floor adult services area.

Monday – Wednesday 9am – 8pm; Thursday – 9am-6pm; Friday and Saturday – 9am-5pm

Our genealogy collection is utilized by patrons from throughout Southwest Florida, from all 50 states, and various foreign countries. The staff serves patrons via in-house visits and electronic queries. The Fort Myers Regional Library maintains the largest print genealogy and local history collection in Southwest Florida. Carol Weidlich, Past President of the Lee County Genealogical Society, has converted the Fort Myers Library's Genealogy Shelf List to a searchable database by location and subject on the Lee County Genealogy Society website

<https://lcgsfl.org/libraryRecords.php>.

The holdings of Fort Myers Regional Library are accessible during normal business hours. Experienced genealogists most of whom are members of the Lee County Genealogical Society, are available by appointment to work with patrons needing assistance with genealogy research. For more information on this, please contact Bryan L. Mulcahy at bmulcahy@leegov.com. We recommend that genealogy researchers consider joining a local genealogical society for research

assistance and other genealogy-related services. Please contact Bryan Mulcahy for further information. The Lee County Genealogical Society is the largest society in the county and offers a full range of genealogical and educational services. Their website is <http://www.lcgsfl.org>.

Patrons may contact Bryan L. Mulcahy by telephone, letter, or e-mail bmulcahy@leegov.com. Mr. Mulcahy is familiar with the contents of collection at Fort Myers and surrounding regional collections. He can also discuss the resources held by various private genealogists, as well as the resources and services offered by local genealogical and historical societies within the states of Florida, Georgia, New York City, and Salt Lake City.

Mr. Mulcahy also presents programs on a wide variety of topics pertaining to genealogical research. Information about genealogical programs can be found on the Lee County Library System website at <https://www.leegov.com/library/services/genealogy>. Please direct any programming queries or suggestions to Mr. Mulcahy. For more information on upcoming library programs, please visit the following link <https://www.leegov.com/library/programs>. All programs are free and open to the public but registration is required.

Collection Scope

The Fort Myers Regional Library genealogy collection contains materials from all 50 states, and 55 foreign countries. The primary focus of the Fort Myers Regional Library collection includes states east of the Mississippi River, Canada, the British Isles, and the northwestern tier of Europe.

Patrons holding a valid Lee County Library card may access the library databases via the library home page <https://www.leegov.com/library/services/genealogy>. Both Heritage Quest and Ancestry Library Edition may be accessed from any branch of the Lee County Library System. Heritage Quest also can be accessed from home, provided users have a valid Lee County Library card. The Fold3 database is only available to patrons at the Fort Myers Regional Library. No access is available at home or at other branch libraries. Patrons with laptops can access the library databases (with the exception of Fold3) at all branches of the Lee County Library System.

Collection Contents and Material Types

The Fort Myers Regional Library collection consists of the following holdings:

1. Print material: 10,630 book titles.
2. Fort Myers *News-Press* (1884-present): 1,151 rolls of microfilm.
3. Bonita Banner (Bonita Springs) 1959-1992 (microfilm)
4. Bonita Springs Extra 1981-1985 (microfilm)
5. IGI International Genealogical Index 1978 and 1992 editions (microfilm) **NOTE: While the content may be seemed dated, many researchers find this tool increasingly useful because the 1978 and 1992 microfilm editions include information that has never been added to the Family Search database for a variety of reasons.**
6. New York Times (September 1851-present): 3,887 rolls of microfilm.
7. Florida State Census of 1885: 13 rolls of microfilm.
8. Florida Federal Census 1830-1920: 100 rolls of microfilm.
9. New England Historical and Genealogical Register v.1-80: 27 rolls of microfilm, including an index.

10. Port of New York Passenger Lists, June-December 1869: 10 rolls of microfilm.
11. International Genealogical Index – 1978 Microfiche Edition: 6,000 microfiche.
12. Fort Myers *News-Press* Necrology Index – Compiled by the Lee County Genealogical Society: over 8,000 index cards.
13. Genealogy and Local History Vertical File Cabinets: 1,000 + items. These cabinets contain newspaper clippings, documents, and manuscripts, covering Southwest Florida and topics of genealogical interest worldwide.

Most of the genealogical materials in our print collection are considered secondary sources. Additional research in primary source records is recommended, and can be found in our databases such as Ancestry Library Edition, Family Search, Fold 3, and Heritage Quest. Our indexes and secondary sources provide information about requesting official records from courthouses or agencies that have jurisdiction over public access.

Examples of genealogy materials available for research include:

1. Indexes to primary source records:
 - a. Land records
 - b. Vital records (births, marriages, divorces, and deaths)
 - c. Military service and pension records
 - d. Township, city, and state records (tax records, voter registrations, licenses)
2. Bibliographies of holdings in genealogical research institutions in the U.S. and Europe.
3. Published family histories.
4. Historical maps and gazetteers for most states east of the Mississippi River, Canada, the British Isles, Europe and Russia.
5. Personal narratives of historical events.
6. Selected genealogical periodicals.
7. Self-help books on specific genealogical research topics.
8. Approximately 200 research guides and outlines on a wide variety of topics for genealogists at all levels of experience.
9. Information for contacting family associations, genealogical/historical societies, organizations, and repositories, both local and worldwide.
10. Subscription databases: **Ancestry Library Edition**, and **Heritage Quest**: Both databases are available at every branch within the Lee County Library System. Heritage Quest is available via remote access from home provided the user has a valid Lee County Library card. **Fold 3**, which specializes in military research is only available at Fort Myers Regional Library.

The secondary resources in our genealogical collections provide researchers with the contact information necessary to access primary records and documents from the jurisdiction where their ancestors resided. The information usually includes the fee structure, forms, and the address, fax, or telephone information needed to process the request. The library can also borrow genealogical materials from other libraries nationwide via our Inter-Library Loan Department. Further details on Inter-Library Loan will be discussed later in this study guide.

Patrons may view a copy of the genealogy collection shelf list on the Lee County Genealogical Society website <http://www.lcgsfl.org/libraryRecords.php> or visit the Genealogy Room at Fort Myers Regional Library.

Collection Organization

The Fort Myers Regional Library genealogical collection is organized in six sections:

1. **General Collection:** This section is located near the Genealogy Desk. Items in the general collection include:
 - a. Bibliographies (very useful for inter-library loan information)
 - b. "How-to" books on genealogical research (general and regional)
 - c. Directories that list genealogical and historical society's worldwide
 - d. Family histories
 - e. General U.S. records
 - (1) Bounty land grants
 - (2) Immigration and naturalization records
 - (3) Military service records and pension applications
 - (4) Land/taxation records
 - f. Indexes to public and private library or repository holdings
 - g. Lineage books for organizations such as the D.A.R. (Daughters of the American Revolution) and indexes for genealogical periodicals.
2. **International Collection:** This section contains genealogical materials specific to individual countries. Currently, there are materials covering 55 nations in Europe, Asia, Africa, Middle East, Australia/New Zealand, and Caribbean. The name of each country has been abbreviated on a color-coded dot on the spine of every book. Countries are in alphabetical order by country name and shelved in Dewey Decimal order within each country. The library's international materials include the following subjects:
 - a. Governmental structure
 - b. Historical events
 - c. Immigration and migration within the country
 - d. Passenger lists of ships
 - e. Name and place guides
 - f. Surname directories for a specific area.
3. **State Materials:** Materials in this section include records unique to each of the 50 states.
 - a. Bibliographic holdings for libraries or repositories within a given state
 - b. Religious records
 - c. Biographies or family sketches
 - d. County histories
 - e. Court records, including vital records and probate files
 - f. State and county land, tax, and property records.

Each state is identified by a color-coded dot citing the postal code on the spine of every book. The books within each state section are shelved in Dewey Decimal order.

4. ***Microfilm/Fiche:*** Microform materials are located in the black cabinet beside the book scanner near the windows facing Cornog Plaza. The two exceptions are the *New York Times* and the Fort Myers *News-Press*. These items are located in the Microfilm Room on the library's second floor. Holdings in the Genealogy Room include:

a. Florida Census Microfilm, 1830-1930

To determine when a Florida county was created, consult Everton's ***Handy Book for Genealogists*** shelved in the genealogy collection under the call number **Gen 929.1 HAN**. This book provides a brief description of the record-keeping history of each state and the development of each county. It also contains contact information for courthouses, as well as when the county was created and the name of the "parent" county.

b. Florida State Census 1885

c. *The New England Historical Genealogical Register* on 26 rolls of microfilm covering 1847-1982, including an index for all rolls during those years.

d. Miscellaneous 1850 census data for Kentucky, Georgia, Virginia, and one roll of 1870 census data for Marion County, Iowa. The Bonita Springs Public Library also has an incomplete but larger run of the 1850 census on microfilm that focuses on the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and some of the "upper tier" Southern States.

e. Postal Returns - Fort Myers, Florida 1850-1857.

f. Records of the United States Army Continental Commands - 1821-1920, Surgeons' Reports

g. Records of the United States Adjutant General's Office - 1780-1917, Letters from Fort Denaud

h. Genealogy of the Cleveland and Cleavland Families. 3 volumes

5. ***International Genealogical Index (1978 and 1992 editions)***

The Fort Myers Regional Library has both editions of the IGI on microfiche. The microfilm is located in the microfilm room on the 2nd floor inside the gray cabinets on the right side of the room where periodicals are housed. **NOTE: While the content may be seem dated, many researchers find this tool increasingly useful because the 1978 and 1992 microfilm editions include information that has never been added to the Family Search database for a variety of reasons.**

This set is still useful for historical purposes, but most of the content has been updated and included within current databases on Family Search <http://www.familysearch.org>.

6. ***Genealogy Research Study Guides:*** There are over 200 study guides covering a variety of subjects to assist researchers who do not have time to read an entire book. Patrons may photocopy these study guides at a cost of \$.10 per page. Please contact Bryan Mulcahy at (239) 533-4626 or via email at bmulcahy@leegov.com for more information. **NOTE: These study guides are intended to serve as an overview or outline for patrons using the genealogy collection at Fort Myers Regional Library. The compiler emphasizes that the information contained in these study guides should not serve as a substitute for taking the time to read one of the books or articles cited in the bibliography, or attend lectures given by the subject specialists cited as authors.**

Genealogical Periodicals

Since many genealogical periodicals are now available online through a number of websites such as Ancestry, Heritage Quest, and Family Search, we have reduced the number of genealogical periodicals housed in the library. Articles in periodicals may be accessed via PERSI. Which is only available through the Find My Past subscription database. Fort Myers Regional library has no access to this database.

PERSI, the genealogical periodical index operated by Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, enables patrons to obtain photocopies of articles pertaining to specific areas of research. Patrons may order copies of the articles by following the instructions and completing the order sheet provided on the Allen County Public Library's website

<https://acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy>. Family Search Wiki also has an article that discusses PERSI at the following link

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Periodical_Source_Index_\(PERSI\)](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Periodical_Source_Index_(PERSI)). Patrons also may request these articles using the Lee County Library System's inter-library loan service as long as they can provide the exact citation. Our collection also includes various print sources that contain subject references to periodicals, which may enable us to locate the periodical citation.

Most of the genealogical periodicals in the genealogy collections at all library locations are state or country-specific. They are shelved within each state section according to the Dewey Decimal number on the spine of the book. Periodicals that are specific to a state are shelved within the "State Materials" section.

Listed below are several examples of genealogy periodicals in the collections:

1. *Connecticut Nutmegger*(Connecticut)
2. *Mayflower Quarterly* (Massachusetts)
3. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (General Collection)
4. *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* (New York)
5. *North Carolina Genealogical Journal* (North Carolina)

Research Tips for Patrons

1. ***General "How-To" Materials:***

If you are just beginning your research, you may want to check out a general "how-to" genealogy book. A small collection of genealogy books is located in the 929.1 section of Adult Non-fiction. These books are part of the circulating collection and are available for check out. If Fort Myers is not the branch library you normally use, you may request these items from any branch, and they will be sent via inter-department mail to a branch library that is convenient for you.

2. ***Examine all books concerning the given country, state, or subject area you are researching:***

Most of the genealogy materials are included in the library catalog. A separate shelf list containing all of the Fort Myers Regional Library genealogy materials is available in the

Genealogy Room, at the Adult Reference Desk or online at the website for the Lee County Genealogical Society website at <https://lcgsfl.org/libraryRecords.php>.

3. *Join one or more of the local genealogical societies*

Lee County has three genealogical societies.

- a. The Lee County Genealogical Society meets the third Thursday of each month at the Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church, 8260 Cypress Lake Drive, Fort Myers. They offer assistance for beginners, special interest groups, and other related research. <https://lcgsfl.org/about.php>
 - b. The Bonita Springs Genealogy Club meets on the second Thursday of each month at the Bonita Springs Public Library from 2-4pm. For further information, please visit their website link at <http://lcgsfl.org/cpage.php?pt=163> or contact Jean Gilbert at jgil387867@me.com.
 - c. The Pine Island Genealogy Society meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month from October through May at the Pine Island Library from 1-3pm. The address of the branch is 10701 Russell Road, Bokeelia, FL 33922. They do not have a current operating website. For more information on membership, research assistance or library collection content, please contact Jerry Cernicky at jerrycernicky@embarqmail.com .
4. ***Consult Periodicals:*** Many genealogical periodicals such as *New England Historical and Genealogical Society Register*, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, and the *Connecticut Nutmegger* contain vast amounts of research pertaining to vital records, probate records, family histories, land records, military and pension records, church and Bible records, as well as queries and book reviews. Queries can be worth their weight in gold to researchers.
5. ***Research Guides:*** There are over 200 genealogy study guides covering a variety of subjects to assist researchers who do not have time to read an entire book. Patrons may photocopy these study guides at a cost of \$.10 per page or obtain an electronic or paper copy of the subject listings of what study guides are available by visiting or by contacting Bryan L. Mulcahy at (239) 533-4626 or bmulcahy@leegov.com. Please note the following disclaimer which appears on all study guides. **NOTE: These study guides are meant to serve as an overview or outline for patrons using the genealogy collection at Fort Myers Regional Library. The compiler emphasizes that the information contained in these study guides should not serve as a substitute for taking the time to read books or articles cited in the bibliography, or attend lectures given by the subject specialists cited as authors.**

ILL (Inter-Library Loan) Services

Many of our genealogy books contain references to more detailed primary and secondary sources. These source materials may not be available in the Lee County Library System and may only be available at university or large genealogy libraries. The Lee County Library System

participates in the nationwide resource-lending program known as Inter-library Loan (ILL). This makes it possible for researchers to obtain either photocopies or books from other institutions.

Due to recent budget and staffing cuts, the library system has had to modify certain long-standing procedures, which are also applicable in most library systems throughout the country. ILL services are subject to the following criteria:

1. Historically, there has not been a charge for this service. However, due to the increasing number of libraries that are charging the library system for borrowing privileges, we are required to ask patrons if they are willing to pay fees for this service.
2. Fees are assessed only if the lending institution imposes a fee on our library system. We will call the patron prior to ordering the book if this situation arises.
3. If the patron states that they do not want to pay any fee, we will attempt to borrow the item but limit the search ONLY to institutions that do not charge fees.
4. We can only accept one ILL request per patron per day.
5. Since many ILL materials come from private or academic libraries, there is usually a 2-6 week waiting period. Please note that during the holiday season, most academic and some smaller public libraries close from the middle of December through January 1. This usually impacts ILL requests submitted during this time.
6. Please be advised that we cannot borrow National Archives or Family History Library microfilm through ILL.

When requesting photocopies from genealogical periodicals, patrons MUST supply the exact citation and volume number, page number, and date of publication. This is emphasized because many libraries will not process requests that lack the page number or volume number.

On a case-by-case basis, some of the genealogical reference materials from the Fort Myers Regional Library may be loaned to various branches in the Lee County Library System for “in-house” use only; i.e., the item cannot be checked out. “In-House” use is limited to 5-7 days and is restricted due to the demand for the item. Lending of these materials is done at the discretion of the genealogy librarian and photocopies of indexes or specific pages may be furnished in lieu of the book. For more information on this matter, please contact Bryan L. Mulcahy at 239-533-4626 or via email at bmulcahy@leegov.com.

As of July 31, 2009, the National Archives has suspended their microfilm-lending program. Patrons can see other options at their website

<http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/index.html>. Access to virtually all federal census data is available on Ancestry Library Edition, Family Search, Heritage Quest, and other databases. For other subjects, the National Archives site offers a listing of all the relevant microfilm rolls and inventory numbers. At this point, researchers have two options:

1. Check with a library in the vicinity to see if they have purchased any of the microfilm.
2. Check the Family History Library Catalog at <http://www.familysearch.org> to see if the same information is available in their holdings.
3. Visit the National Archives website at <http://www.archives.gov/research/genealogy/> for further options.

As of September 14, 2017, Family Search discontinued its microfilm lending program. They are now 100% focused on the digitization process to put the images on the Family Search website. This digitization process should be completed by December 2020. This topic is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Family Search Library Affiliate Services

Until the microfilm lending program was terminated as of August 31, 2017, patrons could order microfilm and specify delivery to the Fort Myers Regional Library. All films that were onsite as of the termination date are now part of our microfilm inventory of holdings. Our Genealogy Department has a complete listing by film number of the films that were retained on permanent loan from Family Search. Many of the films in our collection have now been digitized but are available for research in the event the Family Search site is down or the film has not yet been digitized. To obtain an electronic copy of the inventory of our microfilm holdings from Family Search, please contact Bryan L. Mulcahy at bmulcahy@leegov.com.

As of December 2017, The Fort Myers Regional Library has been upgraded to the status of a Family Search History Library Affiliate. The designation of being a Family Search History Library Affiliate enables us to provide access to most of the digitized holdings of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, with one exception. This involves any Family Search films that are under copyright restriction imposed by the agency or entity that allowed the Family History Library and Family Search to film the records. Copyright-restricted films can only be viewed at designated Family History Centers.

Family History Centers (FHC)

NOTE: As of May 2021, all FHCs have been temporarily closed due to maintenance of the LDS online platform. The platform the church uses in the FHCs is more than 20 years old. In order to expand the center and to protect records they had to redesign the platform. Some of the changes have to do with record agreements. Once this process is completed, it will result in enhanced service and even more records will be available. The goal is to have most if not all FHC's back in operation by September.

If the record being searched is under copyright restrictions that require patrons to visit an official LDS Family History Center, the following options available to obtain access.

1. **Naples Family History Center**

The Naples Family History Center has access to the Family History Center Portal page which gives free access in the center to premium family history software and websites that generally charge for subscriptions.

Address: 4935 23rd Court SW, Naples, FL 34116. The entrance is at the rear of the building. Please use the door to the left.

Hours of operation: Access is available by appointment only.

Contact person: For appointments please contact Amy Wolfe at 239-860-7597.

Email: a.r.wolfe@gmail.com

- a. To use the Naples Florida Family History Center you will need a FamilySearch.org account. Family Search.org is a free genealogy site.

- b. Please make sure you have all your login information and passwords including your email so you can email yourself information or a thumb drive.
- c. If you chill easily, please bring a sweater.
- d. Patrons may bring their own laptops and tablets.

Driving Directions from Downtown Fort Myers

- a. Driving distance and approximate time: 38.3 miles, about 45 minutes.
- b. Take I-75 South toward Naples;
- c. Take the Pine Ridge Road Exit 107 toward Golden Gate/Naples. Keep left to take the ramp toward Golden Gate;
- d. Turn left onto Pine Ridge Road/Hwy. 896;
- e. Turn right onto Logan Boulevard. Logan Boulevard becomes Santa Barbara Boulevard;
- f. Turn left onto Coronado Parkway;
- g. Turn left onto 50th Terrace;
- h. Turn right onto 23rd Court (just past 24th Avenue)

2. **Bradenton Family History Center**

Address: 3400 Cortez Road, Bradenton, FL 34210

Hours of Operation: Monday 9am-Noon; Tuesday and Wednesday 6:30pm-9pm

Phone: (941) 755-6909

E-Mail: FL_Bradenton@familyhistorymail.org

NOTE: Because of the driving distance, it is strongly recommended that patrons call before coming.

Driving Direction from Fort Myers

- a. Take 1-75 North to Exit 217b University Park (Bradenton exit);
- b. Merge west into 53rd Avenue and follow to 14th street for 7.56 miles;
- c. Turn right onto 14th Street (Tamiami Trail) and follow for 1.01 miles;
- d. Turn left onto Cortez Avenue, (FL 684) and follow for 1.3 miles;
- e. 3400 Cortez is on the right;

NOTE: The driving distance is 91.7 miles. Please allow for 1.5 to 2 hours for driving time based on weather and driving conditions.

Additional Information

- a. There are 5 computers in the main room and a 6th one in his office that would be available if necessary.
 - b. Patrons are also permitted to bring their own laptops and tablets.
 - c. There are multiple classrooms available in the immediate vicinity of the research room that can handle up to 20 patrons.
3. For Family History Centers located elsewhere, call (800) 346-6044 or visit <https://www.familysearch.org/locations/>
 4. Contact the agency that created the record. The informational entry on the Family Search website should provide this information. Once you have the name of the agency, look it up online. There should be an icon for “contact” which will provide additional information.
 5. The record you need may be available on subscription sites such as Ancestry.com, Find My Past, Fold 3, or My Heritage.

**Compiled by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian, Fort Myers Regional Library
8/5/2021**