

Researcher says Internet has wealth of information

By Seth Schmidt

Interested in compiling your family's history?

"Start with the things that you know," advises Molly Schweinfurter, who presented a "Beginner's Genealogy Workshop" at the Tracy Public Library Saturday.

First steps, the Redwood Falls woman said, can be as simple as talking with family members, writing down one's own knowledge, and perusing family scrapbooks, photos, and records. Beginners should fill in a family pedigree chart as far as possible.

After those initial efforts, Schweinfurter shares, the fun of learning about one's ancestors is only beginning.

"It gets in your blood, and one thing leads to another. It's surprising what you can find." Quoting author Alex Haley, Schweinfurter said that "the need for knowing who you are is universal."

A class in college piqued Schweinfurter's own interest in genealogy, and she's been delving into her family's past ever since.

Birth, marriage, death, immigration, citizenship, organizational, land, newspaper, U.S. Census, plat books, agricultural, and church records can all provide a wealth of information, the



Presenter Molly Schweinfurter says that researching family history is a fascinating endeavor.

presenter suggests.

Relatives can be a gold mine for family history, she adds. For example, a German relative provided a photograph of Schweinfurter's immigrant great-grandparents.

"It's a treasure. I was very happy to get it."

Compiling family history, requires perseverance, organization, and curiosity, Schweinfurter says. However, the Internet age has made access to information easier and quicker. She shared nearly three-dozen on-line web sites and links that she has found useful. (The list is available at the library).

Schweinfurter urges family history researchers to share their information with other family members, and ideally, publish a permanent account.

"Don't be a hoarder. Pass it on."

Schweinfurter also says researchers should be prepared for surprises.

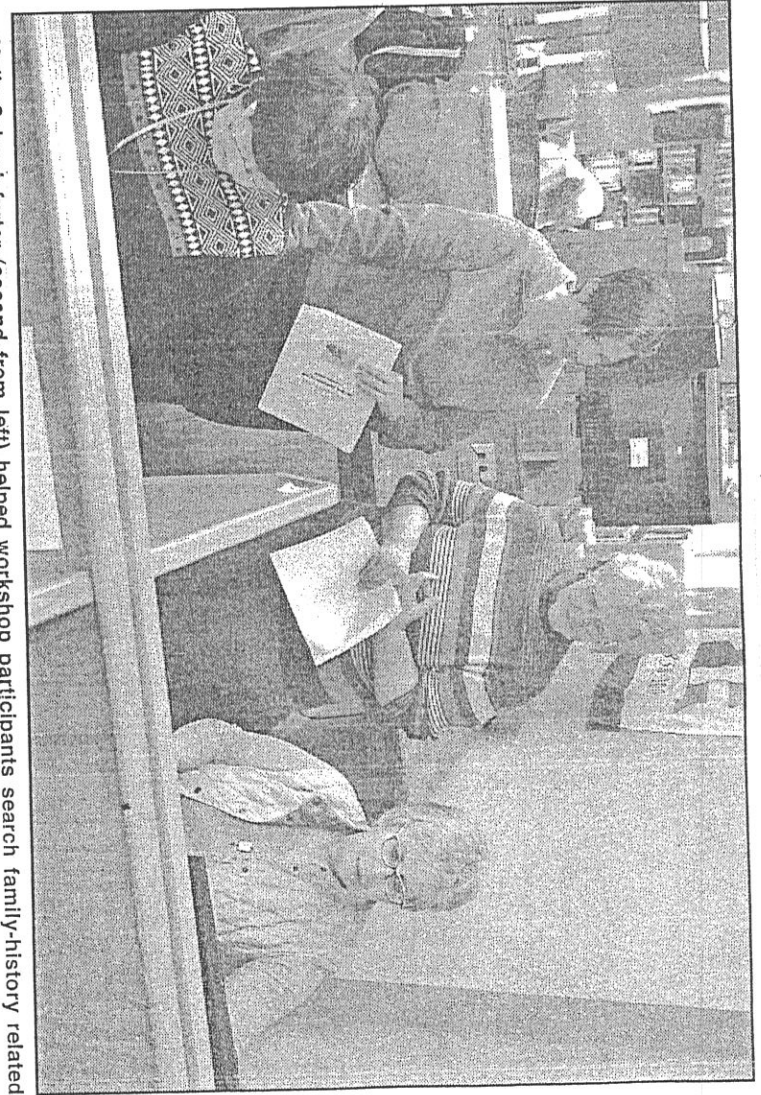
A story handed down in her family held that her great-grandfather Schweinfurter had emigrated from Bavarian to avoid being conscripted into the military. However, records in Germany indicated that Schweinfurter had served in the military prior to emigration.

"The story was wrong. What you think you know might not necessarily be true."



Family roots

Molly Schweinfurter (second from left) helped workshop participants search family-history related websites on library computers.



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