"Family Search is Ready for Use"
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In an earlier column I wrote that the Historical Society and the Carroll County Genealogical Society had formed a partnership to purchase a new computer system called "Family Search." This new source uses CD-ROM technology and allows the researcher to search millions of records in a matter of seconds. The computer system is now being used by the general public and a number of researchers, including this writer, have made some interesting discoveries. Family Search consists of five resource files.

Ancestral File contains vital information on over 15 million individuals linked into family groups and pedigrees. The information in Ancestral File is GEDCOM compatible. Users can print or download information onto diskette from Ancestral File for their own family records. This reduces time spent copying names, dates and places. The names and addresses of submiters are also available for records in Ancestral File so that research efforts may be coordinated and shared between genealogists. Users are encouraged to contribute their own efforts and findings so that they may be included in future updates.

I was pleased to find the names of my paternal grandparents in this file. Within a few minutes I had a printout of a pedigree chart beginning with my grandparents and tracing up to nine generations to the earliest ancestor, Heinrich Wampfler (1590-1615) who lived and died in Switzerland. I could also have downloaded a copy of the record onto a floppy disk that I could take home. This new information added up to four new generations to my family tree.

The International Genealogical Index is the largest, single index of its kind. It lists the names and vital information of over 200 million individuals from the middle ages to modern times. These records can be searched by name, parents' names, spouse names, or country of an event. The 1993 new edition of the IGI features the following sets of discs: British Isles and Wales; Continental & Southwest Europe; Germany; Mexico; North America (U.S. & Canada); Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland); South & Central America, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, & Misc. World.

In checking this file, I found numerous references to family members. There were several references to the above mentioned Heinrich Wampfler and one noted that he lived in Zwischenfluh, Bern, Switzerland. I have also helped several people look for ancestors from England, Germany, the Caribbean, Italy and elsewhere with good results.

The Family History Library Catalog describes the collection of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah (the most comprehensive library of its kind in the world). The collection includes extensive census, church, immigration, military, probate and vital records acquired from many countries, states, counties and towns. This compact disc version of the Catalog provides on-line help, searches for key words and spelling variations, and browses local records.

A search of this file revealed only one exact match of my surname but there were 51 additional sources for the following variant spellings: Grabeal, Grabell, Grabill, Grable, Graybell, Graybiel, Graybill, Greubele, Greybell and Groble. All are potential resources given the variety of spellings for Pennsylvania German surnames such as mine.

The Social Security Death Index & Military Index: The United States Social Security Death Index in an index of approximately 39.5 million names of deceased individuals dating primarily from 1962 through 1988 whose families collected Society Security death benefits. With this index, researchers can find birth and death dates, an ancestor's last place of residence, where death payments were sent, and the individual's Social Security Number. The Social Security Number may be used to obtain additional information from the Social Security Administration, such as place of birth and parents' names. On-line assistance also provides information on how to order a civil death certificate from the appropriate state. The Military Index list almost 100,000 United States military service men and women who died in the Korean (1950-1957) and Vietnam (1957-1975) conflicts. This index is on the fourth disc of the Social Security Death Index. Genealogical, military, family and some personal information may be obtained for each individual included on the index.

The Social Security Index is a great resource for finding information about people who lived in the present century. I easily printed out records for nearly 200 Graybeals, all of whom are related to me. With the name of the community where they died, one could easily track down a local newspaper and request an obituary.

The Military Index is easily the smallest and least valuable file in Family Search. Out of curiosity, I checked to see if any Graybeals died in Korea or Vietnam and found out that two had been killed in Korea. Military sources could provide additional information if I wanted to learn more about these two men.

In the few hours that I have used Family Search, I have been impressed with the ease with which one can search huge files in seconds. The system is very user friendly and one can get started with only a few minutes of instruction. The files are so vast, however, that I expect to make new discoveries every time I use the system.

Photo Caption:  The writer using the new "Family Search" computer in the Historical Society's Library at 210 E. Main St. in Westminster. The new resource is a joint project of the Historical Society and the Carroll County Genealogical Society. The system uses CD-ROM technology to search millions of genealogical records in a matter of seconds.

Side Bar Copy:   The "Family Search" computer system is available for use at the Historical Society's library, 210 E. Main St. in Westminster, during regular hours (Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-12:30 and 1:00-4:00 and Saturdays, 9:00-12:00N). Patrons can reserve computer time by calling the Society (848-6494). Members of the Historical or Genealogical Society may use the system for $1 per hour; non-members pay $2. User fees will be used to offset a license fee, upgrades and the acquisition of new CDs.