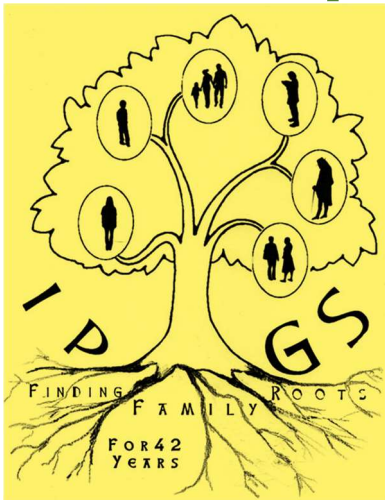


Imperial Polk Genealogical Society

Newsletter Fall 2024



Programs not to miss!

Mark your calendar for each second Saturday at 1 p.m. Meetings are both in-person and virtual. For October and November, join us at the Lakeland Public Library History Room. Or request a Zoom link at news@ipgs.com.

Keeping the Story Alive: Creating Family History Books

October 12 – Linda Dunroe will tell her personal story of writing family history books, research decisions for self-publishing, and discuss resources. She has authored two books about her own family history.

Say Cheese!

Photographs and Photography in Genealogical Research

November 9 – Steve Schultz will guide us, from a genealogical perspective, to date old photos, preserve these priceless pieces, and use them for documentation.

National Family History Month

Polk County has featured volunteer research by IPGS member Marilyn Tucker to illustrate resources at the Polk Historical and Genealogical Library. Look [here](#) to see how she got started, connected to a past scientific celebrity, and has helped others with their historic quests. See what mysteries she has helped solve and what discoveries have kept her exploring the rich past.

*The story features IPGS member
Marilyn Tucker for her volunteer work*



This is one of Marilyn's family discoveries from 1890s Ohio.

The story points out that October is National Family History Month, designated by Congress in 2001. To celebrate, the National Genealogical Society has free, helpful, online [resources](#), declaring, "Sharing family history is an act of love." No wonder you enjoy it!



Our Mission

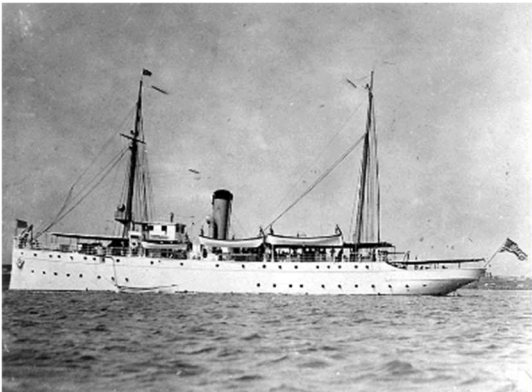
The Imperial Polk Genealogical Society's mission is to encourage and promote the study of genealogy and to bring together people who have an interest in family history.

Member profile: Melvin Sellers finding a seaman's survivors

IPGS member Melvin Sellers has spent many hours helping in a unique genealogical hunt. The objective was finding relatives to accept long-overdue military honors for World War I victims of a German U-boat torpedo.

His efforts helped to honor local Coast Guard recruit Bert Hunter Lane at Lakeland's Veterans Park. Lane died on the USS Tampa off the coast of Wales. This was one of only a half dozen Coast Guard ships called to protect Atlantic convoys carrying troops and supplies to Europe. In 18 crossings, the Tampa was officially honored for safekeeping all but two of the some 350 ships it escorted.

Lane, who enlisted at 21, was just short of 18 months at war. On a night with poor visibility, the coal-fired steamer split ahead in the Bristol Channel to refuel—and caught a torpedo strike. A second explosion came from the cache of battle-ready depth charges, and the ship went down within three minutes. The



Tampa Bay Times reported, "The USS Tampa sank so quickly on Sept. 26, 1918, that none of the 131 people aboard had time to signal for help." The captain of the attacking, German U-boat later said he surfaced within 15 minutes, and "Nothing found."

Mel, our researcher and 22-year Coast Guard retiree, also tracked two brothers from Davenport who died on the Tampa. Algy and Arthur Bevins were among the 34 Floridian crew members. A rich story of the brothers' participation remains from Algy's generous correspondence home, now preserved on Florida Memory, at the State Library and Archives of Florida. (Click [here](#) to link.)

Mel, now 89, was well suited to this research. After two years as a reservist in high school, his own Coast Guard service finally landed him at Morehead City, NC, as a court reporter for investigative marine inspection. He is a life member and long-time participant with IPGS.

A stepmother survived the young Lakeland crewman who died just six weeks before the Armistice. The 10 Oct. 1918 *Lakeland Evening Telegram* reported, "A beautiful and impressive ceremony was held in the Park in honor of Bert H. Lane," punctuated by a three-volley salute by the Home Guards. It said, "The Lakeland Band, of which young Lane was a member, rendered a concert of beautiful and patriotic airs."

Mel said the Davenport brothers had a sister who married twice but had no children. "The Coast Guard will issue a Purple Heart Medal to a grand-niece or grand-nephew," Mel said. "I and a friend found five and none of them are willing to accept the medal." The search came to fruition last spring, when they found a distant cousin. She was able to claim the marker for Lane, and it now rests in Lakeland's Lakeview Cemetery.

