

Title: Ozarks Genealogical Society – A Year in the Life

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The Ozarks Genealogical Society (OGS) is located at 534 West Catalpa Street in Springfield, Missouri. Founding members were Mary Adams, Emily Barr, Joan Bellmann, Gladys Bishop, Lea Bousman, Irene Kanute, Laura Milner, Mrs. Charles Obrock, Dorothea Owen, Stella Visio, Beverly Wade, Inez West and Lena Wills. The stated mission or purpose of the Society: 1. To educate and encourage members and the general public in the art and practice of genealogical research. 2. To acquire a collection of genealogical and historical material for a genealogical library available to members and the general public. 3. To collect, preserve and publish genealogical and historical materials relating to the Missouri Ozarks region. 4. To maintain and elevate genealogical standards.

In 1969, these like-minded people were working together, trying to find resources in order to search their family trees. They met in each other's homes at first. Then an agreement with the Midtown Carnegie Branch of the Springfield-Green County Library (SGCL), located at 397 E. Central, provided them with not only a place to do research, but also to store some of the books they had started buying. OGS members continued buying more reference books, and eventually ran out of room at the Library. Space was rented in an office building for a while, but in 1988, a building at 534 W. Catalpa Street was purchased and converted into our own library. Through donations the initial down payment was made, and the balance was paid off within two years. A symbolic burning of the mortgage was held on October 28, 1990.

As the OGS book collection increased, space was soon at a premium even in our own library. At that time the relationship with the Springfield – Greene County Library (SGCL) expanded to the extent that many of the Society's books are now housed in a special section of The Library Center at 4653 S. Campbell, in Springfield. This collaboration is beneficial not only

to the two organizations, but also to the public, by making access to our reference material as easy as possible.

OGS fulfills its mission in many ways, including by making reference material available to the public, both in our own library, and in conjunction with The Library Center. Another way is providing genealogical assistance to non-members. Our Family Research Chair volunteers time to look up information and assist people in their family research.

OGS also provides programs to the public at large. These programs are normally held at The Library Center on the first Monday evening of each month and the third Wednesday morning of each month. Speakers vary from authors, to library staff, to members of other genealogical societies, as well as our own members, one of whom, Patricia Hobbs, is a nationally known Certified Genealogist and expert in DNA.

Also, a day-long conference is held each year, with a different topic highlighted each time. At the conference in 2018, Patti Hobbs presented a DNA workshop. In 2019, the topic was the Civil War.

The OGS website, <https://ozarksgs.org/>, is easy to navigate and is a quick way look up our upcoming programs. Visitors can also visit the OGS Store on the website, where various publications can be purchased. It has several features, including a compiled 1890 census for Springfield, a list of area deaths, and a way to request research assistance. Membership can also be applied for on the website, or applications are also printed on our OGS brochures, which can be found at all branches of the SGCL.

The Society also maintains a Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ozarksgs/>, where we post upcoming programs or events, as well as photos of those events. This page is also used to share information from other organizations.

The OGS Library on Catalpa Street is open to the public on Wednesdays from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. (*from 10:00 – 4:00 on the 2nd Wednesday of the month*), and on Saturdays from 10:00

a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Our library houses thousands of books, and we have more than 3,000 books on loan at The Library Center branch of SGCL.

A year in the life of Ozarks Genealogical Society, during its 50th anniversary year of 2019, began in January with the culmination of a decades long project – scanning obituaries from area newspapers. Years ago, we received several boxes of obituaries clipped from newspapers in several area counties. The project of scanning them was started, but there were more than 100,000 obits, and after a while, interest languished. In 2018, activity picked back up and a committee was formed, which started meeting once every two weeks to get the individual obituaries cut apart, scanned and indexed. Once again, OGS collaborated with The Library Center. Brian Grubbs, Manager of the Local History and Genealogical Department with SGCL, and his team, created a program to make the obituaries available online. This obituary collection is accessible on the SGCL website, as well as on the OGS computer system, at our library.

The new year also brought planning for our 50th Anniversary celebrations. OGS Vice President Gail Mitchell was instrumental in much of this planning, starting with the compilation of a book, “History of OGS 1969 – 2019.” The book used the Society’s newsletters, newspaper articles, etc. to tell the story of the beginnings of Ozarks Genealogical Society. Gail and her committee waded through decades of information to choose which items to include to tell our story. The book went on sale in May of 2019, and we’ve already ordered a second printing. Unfortunately, Gail passed away in April, and many members worked hard to fulfill her vision for celebrating our anniversary. President Connie Daughtrey was able to stop the printing of the book in time to get a memorial to Gail included.

Several celebrations were held in this anniversary year. We started in March with a presentation by SGCL History Associate, and OGS member, John Rutherford, on OGS’s beginnings at the Downtown Carnegie Branch of the Library, where members did research and stored books in the beginning of our society.

In May, a Reception was held at The Library Center on South Campbell, to acknowledge the working relationship we've had with library staff over the years.

Not only was Gail's book about our history published, but a display of photos of members through the years was compiled. Also, many old scrapbooks, copies of a long-time publication called "Ozar'Kin", and other memorabilia were gathered and put on display at the OGS Library, as well as at the Reception at the Library Center in May.

The next celebration was an Open House held at the OGS Library in June. Our OGS library was open for research, as well as tours. A short history of the Society was given by long-time member Doris Wilson.

OGS continued with its usual activities, as well as the anniversary events. Our twice-monthly programs at The Library Center continued, as well as planning for these programs for the rest of the year. Many members stepped up to help cover Gail's duties, and President Connie Daughtrey took on the tasks of scheduling programs through the end of the year, as well as planning our annual fall conference.

Another function that OGS members enjoy is occasional field trips to local historical societies and museums. In March, several members visited the historic Courthouse in Mount Vernon, Missouri, and were able to access materials from the Lawrence County Historical Society's Reading Room. In July, OGS members journeyed to Marshfield, Missouri, where they were given a tour of the Webster County Museum, and then spent time in the research room.

In September, Ozarks Genealogical Society hosted its 17th Annual Fall Conference. The topic this year was "The UnCivil Civil War." Local author and OGS member Tim Ritter was a speaker, as well as Alan Chilton and Jeff Patrick from Wilson's Creek National Battlefield; Stacey Franklin from the Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence, Missouri; Michael Price from the Library Center, and John Dougan from the Missouri State Archives. Charlie Dischinger, husband of OGS Librarian Micki Dischinger, performed a re-enactment on "The Common Soldier."

OGS also is able to offer classes throughout the year. We are lucky to have Patricia Hobbs as a member, and she teaches many of these classes. In October and November, she conducted a six-week DNA course, as well as several other one-day classes.

In October, a walk-through of Springfield's historic Maple Park Cemetery was rained out. We were lucky to have a beautiful fall day in November to complete the tour.

Also, in November we held our Annual Memorial Service to honor OGS members who have died during the year, as well as family of OGS members who died during the past year. This meeting included a special Honor Roll service for the 35 Charter Members who joined OGS from September 1969 to September 1970.

We will wrap in in December, with a Christmas Party at The Library Center. Springfield City Council will be presenting OGS with a Proclamation honoring our 50th Anniversary.

Our 50th year was eventful in so many ways. It was a busy year, full of the many and varied activities that keep our members involved and interested, as well as acknowledgement of the people who came together 50 years ago with a common interest that has continued through another generation of family historians. As the older generations pass the torch to the newer members, we hope to build on their hard work and initiative and continue helping people in our area in the search for their ancestors. The way people research has evolved over the years, and OGS is working to keep in step with new technology, as well as the tried and true option of opening an old book and falling into it.