

# Hayner Library Offers Branching Out Genealogy Classes Every Month

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Hayner Public Library District invites you to the upcoming Branching Out Genealogy Classes with Beth Phillips, who can help community members learn more about their ancestors and history in Alton.

Phillips has been with Hayner since 2009 and started learning about genealogy and family history in the 1970s. She teaches a class every second Thursday of the month and then invites community members to gather every third Thursday of the month to talk about what they've learned and how their research is going. She explained that the group members have formed close relationships and are always welcoming new participants.

“What’s so cool about those second sessions each month is we have developed friendships. We have a core group that comes back every month,” she said.

Every member of the group is usually completing their own family research, but they come together to compare notes, share resources and ask questions. They also share the stories they have learned about their ancestors and local history.

While a lot of this research is done online, Phillips points out that Hayner has several free digital and nondigital resources that people can use, from access to Ancestry.com to city directories and other records on the shelves.

“The city directories, the school yearbooks, church records, cemetery records ,” Phillips said. “It used to be people had to go to books for everything. And you can find a lot online, but not everything, and that’s the value of local libraries and societies. They have records you’re not going to find anywhere else, so I will often tell a person who can’t find anything, call a local library.”

For people who are just starting their genealogy journey, Phillips encourages them to start with whatever records or heirlooms they already own. She helps people create a family tree and decide which ancestor they want to learn more about, and then she and other group members can offer suggestions on where to go from there.

She noted that it’s fascinating to learn about local history and the people who came before her. She enjoys solving “mysteries” in her family tree and reading about the lives of her ancestors.

"It’s so interesting to learn and realize, you know, we struggle in our lives. We all have adversity, we all have problems. So did they, just different,” Phillips said. “You just never know. You just have to try all the sources, and we can help people find the sources they need.”

The next Branching Out Genealogy Class is scheduled for 10 a.m. on April 11 at the Genealogy and Local History Library at 401 State Street in Alton. This month's topic is “Sharing and Learning on Social Media,” and the related discussion group will take place at 10 a.m. on April 18. You can [find out more about upcoming Branching Out Genealogy Classes online](#) at [HaynerLibrary.org](#).