

# Genealogy buff sets up at library



PHOTO BY CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Joanne Skelton sits in the genealogical library in the community center transcribing a will to add to the collection.

**By Caitlyn May**  
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Down a hallway and around the corner of the Cottage Grove Community Center is a room. It smells of glue and newspapers and filing cabinets line the walls. Stacks of newspapers have been filed neatly into binders and in the middle of all of it, is Joanne Skelton.

She's the new assistant librarian for the Cottage Grove Genealogical Society and is available to help sort through records and answer ancestry questions Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On this day, Skelton sat transcribing a will, attempting to decipher information from the scrawled handwriting on a decades' old document. It's information she needs for her daily blog detailing her personal genealogy. Her second and third great-grandfathers traveled to Oregon by covered wagon. Her grandmother is from Creswell. The personal narrative is meant to keep a record for future generations but it also allows Skelton to practice genealogy—a skill she taught herself.

She uses marriage records, census records and obituaries to fill in the blanks of her own family history but now she's helping local residents do the same.

Visitors to the room at the end of the hall, however, are few and far between according to Skelton.

"There's a lot you can do on the internet," she said. "But there are some things you can't find on the internet." She gestures to the rows and rows of books, ordered by the Dewey Decimal System, containing last will and testaments from various states as well as obituaries and maps.

"We have a new project. There's a woman in

our group who is clipping every obituary she can find about someone in Cottage Grove," Skelton said. Once those obituaries are collected, the genealogical society files them either in a sir name book or chronologically.

"The sir name books we have about four filing cabinets of those," she said, pointing down the row, not at all distracted by the sound of heavy footsteps overhead.

The books, as well as the chronological binders and Dewey Decimal System toms are free for anyone to use. Skelton and other librarians on staff are there to help guide the process.

"Once, grandparents came in with their granddaughter and we found a picture of her as a baby in the newspaper," Skelton said. "You never know what you'll find in the newspaper."

While Skelton is an advocate for hard copy documents, she also uses the internet in her searches. She stays up-to-date on current fact-finding methods by attending webinars and utilizes social media pages devoted to DNA, ancestry and history.

Skelton said she enjoys helping others discover their ancestry, working in the library and giving lectures like the one she headed earlier this month about DNA services. She also volunteers during the genealogical society's monthly discussion groups.

"Anyone can come down. We talk about how to find things and we can help you," she said. "If only four people come, we have two hours so each person gets 30 minutes."

The Cottage Grove Community Center is located at 700 E. Gibbs. Skelton is available Wednesday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents curious about their genealogy can also contact the society and Skelton by emailing cggenealogy@cggenealogy.org.

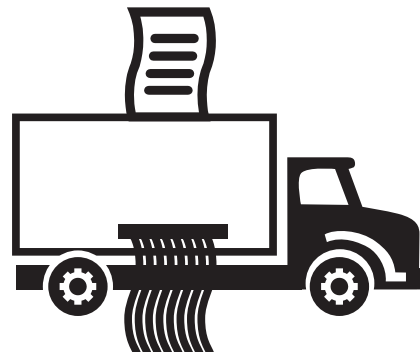


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\*Source: <https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/identity-theft-and-cybercrime>



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