**Editor’s Note:**

No doubt many of you have either heard of or engaged in “FAN” research—that is, researching the friends and neighbors of your ancestors in order to glean more information about your own family tree. But what happens when you are bitten even further by the genealogy bug and start researching beyond your usual scope, dropping down the research hole into a whole new story? It can lead to a fascinating side-road discovery and a new understanding of your neighbor, as this issue’s contributor can attest!

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**ROLFE - BRITTON DISCOVERY**

by Dave Horton

When I was five years old, my parents bought their first house, which was in an older residential area on the main street in Mansfield, Massachusetts. Directly across the road lived an old couple in a small white house that seemed rather run down and became more so in the next few years. We did not realize it, but our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Rolfe, were celebrities.

They lived a quiet life, keeping mostly to themselves. Their neighbors were mostly younger than they were, some very much younger. There would be occasional friendly greetings, but little other interaction. Both of the Rolfe families were mysteries to us, although there were rumors. Mr. Rolfe was rumored to have been a bandleader, and there was a rumor that Mrs. Rolfe had been Harry Houdini’s assistant.

Mr. Rolfe was of medium height, and Mrs. Rolfe was tall. He was stocky and a bit portly, and she was thin. Because Mr. Rolfe died in 1956, about a year after we moved across the street from them, and because I was so young, I have only vague memories of him. Mrs. Rolfe, on the other hand, lived across the road with her little white fluffy dog for about five years before she also passed away in 1960. She had fine clothes but they were outdated for the 1950s, her long dresses having been in style in the 1920s or earlier. Always well dressed, she would even wear a mink stole when she walked her dog.

Some of the children in the neighborhood were a little afraid of her and would not visit her house on Halloween, thinking she might be a witch. True, she seemed odd and dressed differently than our parents or grandparents, but she was a very sweet woman and was very generous. On Halloween she would give trick-or-treaters full-size candy bars, not just little penny candy. She hired the boy who lived next door to her to do chores. He mowed her small lawn, shoveled her walk in the winter, and ran errands to the local market for her, and she paid him very well. Later on, when I saw Katherine Hepburn in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (1969), the main character reminded me of Mrs. Rolfe.

Many years later, I decided to find out who these neighbors were; after all, this is what genealogists do. We piece together people’s pasts. I began with Mrs. Rolfe’s first name, which was Edna, and also with Harry Houdini.

There is always a lot of information on famous people, and there was plenty for Houdini (1874-1926), born Erik Weisz. After their marriage, his assistant was always his wife, Bess. One rumor proved to be incorrect, but another proved true. I discovered that Harry Houdini starred in a film series in 1918, called *The Master Mystery*, and the producer was “B.A. Rolfe.” One of the actresses in the film was Edna Britton. With some more research into city
directories, census records, passport applications, and passenger records, among others, I discovered that my neighbors were Benjamin Albert (B.A.) Rolfe and Edna Letitia (Britton) Rolfe. B.A. had been a trumpet and cornet musician, a band and orchestra leader, and a movie director and producer; Edna Rolfe had been a dancer and an actress.

Benjamin Albert (B.A.) Rolfe

B.A. was the only child of Albert Benjamin and Emma Harriet Rolfe. He was born on October 24, 1879 in Brasher Falls, St. Lawrence County, New York. Brasher Falls is a small town that lies between Potsdam and Massena (NY) on the St. Lawrence River. The 1880 census shows that 8-month-old B.A. lived with his parents in the home of his grandfather, Benjamin Rolfe. Grandfather Rolfe was a retired farmer who was originally from New Hampshire, possibly from the town of Boscawen. Young B.A.’s father, Albert, was a machinist and was 28 years old at the time, having been born in June 1851, in Fort Covington, New York. Emma Rolfe, B.A.’s mother, was younger than her husband, born in February 1853, in Lawrence, New York. Also living in the house was 32-year-old Harriet Rolfe. According to this census, she was Grandfather Benjamin’s daughter, but according to the 1875 New York State census, she was his niece. The latter is likely correct. The will of Harriet B. Rolfe, written on February 8, 1985, and proved on February 12, 1906, bequeathed her estate to her cousin, Albert Benjamin Rolfe, and his wife Emma Harriet Rolfe.

Grandfather Rolfe passed away on March 24, 1888. Albert, Emma, and their son “Bennie” remained in Brasher Falls. The 1900 census listed Albert’s occupation as machinist, and “Bennie” Rolfe’s occupation as laundryman. Harriet B. Rolfe, age 65, was the sister of Albert, according to this record. B.A. may have been employed as a laundryman, but at this same time he was traveling as a musician.

B.A.’s father, Albert Benjamin Rolfe, was a music director, although this was clearly not his primary occupation. Benjamin’s parents imparted a musical ability to their son. At a young age B.A. played the piccolo and cornet in his father’s band, touring the east coast of the United States and also Europe, and was known as “The Boy Trumpet Wonder.” Louis Armstrong singled him out as the man who inspired him to develop the ability to produce very high notes on his trumpet. After high school, he was a musical clown in the traveling Sparks Circus. At about age 18, he left the circus and joined the Majestic Theater Orchestra in Utica, New York, where he played solo cornet and was orchestra leader. This led to a position at the Utica Conservatory of Music as head of the brass instrument department. He was in Utica from 1902 to 1904.

On March 2, 1902, B.A. married Nellie Elizabeth Morse, who was from Brasher Falls. In 1904, B.A. tried a career as a vaudeville producer and bandleader. He had limited success, and reverted to the brass band formula that had worked for him in the past. He began traveling again, soloing with concert bands throughout North America. In 1909, he took one of these ensembles to Europe. His wife did not accompany him. He returned to New York City from Southampton, England, on the ship S.S. Philadelphia on September 26, 1909.

By 1910, the couple had moved to New York City, and lived at 508 135th Street West, which was just off Amsterdam Avenue, near what is now the City College of New York. At 30 years old, his listed occupation was a theatrical manager. Nellie was not listed as employed and they had no children, but she performed with her husband. Living with them were Nellie’s widowed mother, Queenie Morse, and Nellie’s two younger sisters, Fannie and Ada. Queenie was listed as being 50 years old, but was actually 53, having been born on February 10, 1857. Her three daughters were her only surviving children of five with her husband Edward. Fannie Morse, age 19, was born in January 1891, and Ada Morse, age 15, was born in December 1894.

B.A. next tried the motion picture industry, which brought him notoriety as well as success. Before 1912, most American films were made in Fort Lee, New Jersey, the Bronx, and Queens. Between 1914 and 1918, his company,
Rolfe Photoplays Inc., produced more than one hundred silent films. These productions were primarily made in and around Fort Lee, although B.A. did set up his company in Los Angeles, California, where he lived in 1915. The films were distributed through an agreement with Louis B. Mayer’s Metro Pictures Corporation. In some of them he collaborated with director and screenwriter Oscar A. C. Lund, one of which was the 1916 drama *Dorian’s Divorce*, starring Lionel Barrymore. Some of his more memorable films featured the legendary magician and master of escape, Harry Houdini. His film company’s final production was the fifteen-part mystery serial produced in 1919, *The Master Mystery*, starring Harry Houdini. Also appearing in this film was B.A.’s future wife, Edna Britton.

On September 12, 1918, B.A. met his patriotic obligation and registered for the draft, instituted due to the country’s involvement in the Great War. The record named his wife, Nellie Elizabeth Rolfe, as his nearest relative and described him as tall and stout with gray eyes and brown hair. His address at the time was the Hotel Beaudelaire at Broadway and 75th Streets, and he was self-employed.

Financial difficulties caused the end of Rolfe Photoplays, which declared bankruptcy and was then absorbed by Columbia Pictures. B.A. continued to make a living by producing and directing films for Metro Pictures and other independent production companies. His last effort as a director was *Miss 139* in 1921, which starred Diana Allen, a beautiful former Ziegfeld Follies girl.

B.A. and Nellie owned a house at 50 Bow Street in Forest Hills, Queens, New York in the summer of 1920. “Ben” Rolfe was in the “moving picture business” and Nellie was not employed outside the home. That year he revived his career as a performing soloist, music instructor and vaudeville producer. On December 22 of that year, Benjamin arrived in New York City from Southampton, England on the ship *Olympic*. At this time, and in his passport application earlier in the year, he gave his residence as Claridge’s Hotel in New York City. It’s possible that he may have maintained two residences, one close to work in the city and another in Queens. This was likely the beginning of his separation from Nellie (Morse) Rolfe, whom he divorced at about this time. The 1925 census in New York State shows him living in Manhattan with his wife Edna Rolfe.

B.A. was a recognized name in film, vaudeville, and music. He worked with Vincent Lopez in 1924 and 1925. Paul Whiteman inspired him to form his own New York City dance orchestra, which performed at a Chinese restaurant and cabaret on Broadway called the Palais D’Or beginning in 1926. He was billed as “B.A. Rolfe (Trumpet Virtuoso) and his Palais D’Or Orchestra.” The music of this orchestra was broadcast several times each week, and B.A. enjoyed a measure of popularity.

About this time, B.A. became an exclusive Edison recording artist. From 1926 to 1929, he recorded 135 pieces with his dance orchestra, four with his concert orchestra, and he made four solo trumpet recordings. In September 1928 he began performing on radio and recording as “B.A. Rolfe and His Lucky Strike Orchestra” for Edison Records. At one point, B.A. had the highest salary ever paid by Edison to any recording artist. *The Lucky Strike Dance Hour* was heard three hours each week nationwide. The Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra consisted of 55 pieces, and included ex-Whiteman band members Milton Rettenberg, Ross Gorman, and Tommy Dorsey. Gladys Rice and Elizabeth Lennox sang, and B.A. himself was the master of ceremonies.

Lucky Strike dropped B.A.’s orchestra in October 1931. He updated his
orchestra’s sound, and continued working in radio for a few more years. His sponsor in 1932 was Ivory Soap, and in 1933 and 1934 it was Hudson Automobiles. For about ten years beginning in 1934, B.A.’s sponsor was Ripley’s Believe It or Not! on NBC, and B.A. narrated the shows. In 1935 and 1936, B.A. was the leader of The Goodrich Silvertown Orchestra. In 1935 he was also the host of an NBC wake-up show.

This was the time of the Great Depression. American prairie land had become the Dust Bowl, families were fleeing to California, and there were breadlines and unemployment across the country. B.A. thrived, however. He and Edna lived in prestigious accommodations and traveled frequently. In 1930, they lived at 150 West 55th Street in Manhattan. On Christmas Eve of 1931, B.A. and Edna arrived, after six days at sea, at Wilmington, California, from Honolulu, Hawaii, aboard the S.S. City of Los Angeles. From about 1932 to 1937, their residence was 25 Central Park West in New York City, which is on the corner of 63rd Street. This residence is now the 33-story Century Condominium, which opened in 1931. In 1938 and 1939, they lived at 160 Central Park South. Central Park South is 59th Street, and their address was that of the Essex Hotel, a structure of forty-four stories, which also was built in 1931. In movies and television, when there is a scene looking south from Central Park, this hotel with its notable “Essex House” sign is prominently featured.

In August 1932, B.A and Edna returned from a trip to England aboard S.S. Bremen. In 1934, they went to Bermuda aboard the S.S. Monarch of Bermuda, and in 1936, visited Saint John, New Brunswick. Their trip in the winter of 1938-1939 was to Kingston, Jamaica. For this trip Edna gave her true age and birth date, possibly because it came from her passport. In 1940, rather than sailing on a passenger ship, they took a seaplane from Havana, Cuba, to Miami. B.A. registered for the “old man’s draft” in 1942 as required by the Selective Service Act. He was employed by the National Broadcasting Company. The physical description says that he was 5 feet 10.5 inches tall, weighed 250 pounds, had a ruddy complexion, gray eyes, and brown hair. His residence at this time was 480 Park Avenue in New York City, where today an apartment would sell for between $1.1 million and $4.5 million. The current description from the property agent’s website says: “480 Park Avenue boasts an elegant lobby that would put most grand hotels to shame. Designed by noted architect Emery Roth and completed in 1929, apartments in this 21-floor co-op have spacious rooms, wood-burning fireplaces and high ceilings.”

When World War II began, B.A. organized an all-female orchestra to perform patriotic music. This orchestra last played in 1942. In 1943, Benjamin and Edna lived in Long Beach, California, where he was the Director of the Municipal Band. After this, B.A. faded from public performances.

B.A. and Edna moved to Mansfield, Massachusetts, after World War II. They lived in a house at 141 South Main Street, which Edna’s mother had purchased some 30 years earlier. He died of cancer on April 23, 1956, while being treated in Walpole, Massachusetts.

Information on “B.A. Rolfe” is available from Wikipedia, and IMDb. Many of his recordings can be found online on YouTube, at the website for Discography of American Historical Recordings, and at the Archive.com website.

Edna Letitia Britton

Edna Letitia Britton was born on June 28, 1887, in Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, the elder of two daughters born to John W. Britton and Urcilla S. Applegate. John was a bookkeeper who had been born in Sumter, South Carolina. Urcilla was from New Brunswick, New Jersey. On April 27, 1889, in Malden, Bertha, Edna’s younger sister, was born.
John and Urcilla divorced, and Urcilla moved to Boston with her two daughters. In 1900, they lived at 20 Mead Street, and Urcilla made a living as a music teacher. The girls, ages 11 and 12, were in school. The 1900 census also recorded Edna living with her widowed grandmother, Sarah L. Applegate, in Asbury Park, New Jersey. By 1910, Urcilla and her daughters had moved to Somerville, Massachusetts, where they lived at 44 Linden Avenue. Urcilla was still teaching music. Both Edna and Bertha, then ages 22 and 20, respectively, were actresses and dancers. Although Edna was still single, her sister Bertha had been married for four years, which means she was married at about age 16. Also, in the household was 48-year-old Frederick J. Wallbaum, a German immigrant who worked as a clerk. He had been born in Hanover and had immigrated in 1879, and became a naturalized citizen in 1890.

Edna Britton relocated to New York City. As a dancer, New York City would have been the place where she could further her career. On August 29, 1911, in Manhattan, Edna Britton married for the first time. Her husband was Van Dycke Charlier, who was 27 years old and the son of Van Dycke Charlier and Augusta Miller (or Muller).

Edna’s sister, Bertha, also relocated to Manhattan at about the same time. She died there on February 13, 1913, as Bertha E. Evans, having married a second time before her death.

By 1918, Urcilla S. Britton moved into a house she had purchased at 141 South Main Street in Mansfield, Massachusetts. She was listed in the town directory as a dressmaker. This is the little white house that 35 years later would be where I would encounter her daughter Edna. In 1920, the census showed that Frederick Wallbaum was living with Urcilla. The record says that he was her uncle, but this is likely fiction. Frederick was a widower. They probably moved to Mansfield for work. Urcilla was employed as an inspector for a tap and die shop, and Frederick was a foot-press operator in a jewelry factory. A year later, the town directory showed her occupation as “artist.” Having taken her talents to New York City, Edna Britton played Vaneva Carter in the silent film A Scream in the Night in 1919, and in 1920, she played De Luxe Dora in The Master Mystery serials, which starred Harry Houdini. The latter film’s producer was Benjamin Rolfe.

Looking back at the rumors among Edna’s neighbors 35 years later, this is the link between Edna Rolfe and Harry Houdini. She was not his assistant, a role that belonged to Houdini’s wife, but Edna was one of half a dozen actors and actresses in a Houdini film.

The 1925 census for New York State and the 1930 federal census listings in Manhattan showed that Edna was the wife of Benjamin Rolfe. Their marriage must have occurred between 1920, when he was still shown as married to his first wife Nellie, and 1925. For both of these censuses, Edna lied about her age, saying that she was 30 years old in 1925, and 35 years old in 1930. At least her fibs were consistent. She was actually 38 and 43, respectively.

Several times Edna traveled without her husband, probably accompanied by friends. She arrived in New York on March 26, 1934, from Port Au Prince, Haiti, on the S.S. Haiti; on January 28, 1935, from Cristobal, Canal Zone, Panama, on the S.S. Kungsholm; on August 13, 1935, from Southampton, England, on the S.S. Berengaria; on March 30, 1937, from a cruise on the S.S. Aquitania; on March 10, 1938, from a cruise on the S.S. Roma; and on August 15, 1938, from Southhampton, England, on the S.S. Normandie. (The Normandie was a French ship that began transatlantic service in 1935 and was the largest and fastest passenger ship afloat.) On this ship with Edna was Conde Nast.

Edna’s mother, Urcilla Britton, died in Mansfield in 1925. Frederick Wallbaum continued to live there through at least 1930. The census record showed that he owned the home that Urcilla had purchased at 141 South Main Street. He died in 1945, and is buried with his wife Agnes and three children at Glenwood Cemetery in Everett, Massachusetts. After the deaths of Urcilla and Frederick, the little white house in Mansfield must have been left to Edna. When the Rolfs retired, they decided to move to this small town. Both Benjamin and Edna came from humble, if not poor, beginnings and they lived quietly in this small New England town.

The boy who lived next door to Edna Rolfe, the one who helped with her chores and ran her errands, began to learn
the trumpet in 1959. In the following year, the boy across the street did also. Little did they know that their neighbor had been “The Boy Trumpet Wonder.” Mrs. Rolfe did show these boys some of her husband’s music, but she never bragged and lived peacefully and alone. At that age, we two boys had no idea what we were seeing. Oh, that we could sit down now and talk with this interesting man and woman.

Edna Rolfe lived alone on South Main Street after her husband died, and she walked her little dog every day that she could, although she never went far. Amazing to the neighbors at the time, she always cleaned up after her dog, which may be common enough today, but then was something we had not seen before. The dog died about the beginning of August 1960. She died in Mansfield a few days later on August 5th. People in the neighborhood said that all she had in the world was the dog, and with him gone she just died of loneliness.
GENEALOGY

ROLFE


(Possibly Benjamin Rolfe b. Boscawen, Merrimack, NH, 15 Mar 1800, son of Silas and Nancy Rolfe,[7] but evidence is thin. His wife may have been Hannah Hall, b. 1784 [typo?], d. 1870, according to cemetery lists in St. Lawrence County, New York.[9]) Census records give Benjamin Rolfe’s birth as early as 1800, but the gravestone inscription indicates a birth about 1804.

Albert Benjamin Rolfe,[2] b. Fort Covington, Franklin, NY, 58 Jun 1851; d. Brasher Falls, St. Lawrence, NY, 6 Oct 1929; m. Emma Harriet Ballard,[6] probably in Brasher Falls, 1878.[8] She was the daughter of B.A. and Elizabeth Ballard,[9] b. Lawrence, St. Lawrence, NY, 1853; d. Brasher Falls, St. Lawrence, NY, 1928.[10]


m. (1) Nellie Elizabeth Morse, b. Brasher Falls, St. Lawrence, NY, Apr 1880; d. Potsdam, St. Lawrence, NY, 1962; m. Benjamin Albert Rolfe, Brasher Falls, St. Lawrence, NY, 2 Mar 1902; div. probably Manhattan, New York, about 1920. She was the daughter of Edward Morse (1852-1898) and Queen G. Locke (1857-1949).

m. (2) Edna Letitia Britton, possibly in New York City, NY, between 1920 and 1925.[21][22] (see below)

BRITTON

Henry Britton,[1] m. Eliza S. __.[23]

John W. Britton,[2] b. Sumter, Sumter, SC, about 1863; m. Urcilla S. Applegate, Malden, Middlesex, MA, 20 May 1884; div. before 1900.[24]

Urcilla S. Applegate, b. New Brunswick, Middlesex, NJ, 17 Aug 1866; d. Mansfield, Bristol, MA, 1925; m. John W. Britton, Malden, Middlesex, MA, 20 May 1884; div. before 1900; domestic partner Frederick J. Wallbaum, b. Hanover, Germany, 1861; d. 1945; bur. Everett, Middlesex, MA.[25] She was the daughter of John H. and Sarah L. Applegate.


Bertha Britton,[3] b. Malden, Middlesex, MA, 27 Apr 1889; d. Manhattan, New York, NY, 13 Feb 1913; m. (1) __ Peck, Massachusetts, about 1906; m. (2) __ Evans, Manhattan, New York, NY, between 1910 and 1913.


m. (1) Van Dycke Charlier, b. New York, about 1884; m. (1) Edna Letitia Britton, Manhattan, New York, NY, 29 Aug 1911; div. Manhattan, New York, NY, by about 1920; m. (2) Mary C. (Morgan) Reily, Manhattan, New York, NY, 21 May 1923.[26] He was the son of Van Dycke Charlier and Augusta Miller (or Muller).

m. (2) Benjamin Albert Rolfe, possibly in Manhattan, New York, NY, between 1920 and 1925. (see above).
FOOTNOTES


6. 1900 United States Federal Census, (Ancestry.com, original data United States of America, Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, Washington, DC, National Archives and Records Administration, 1900, 1,854 rolls), Brasher, St. Lawrence, NY, Enumeration District 0077, FHL microfilm 1241156, Dwelling 10, Family 11, p. 1, lines 31-34.


10. Queen Locke Morse obituary, “Mrs. Queen Morse,” The Potsdam Herald Recorder, 7 Dec 1949, b. 10 Feb 1857, Brasher, NY, daughter of Elisha & Hanna Spaulding Locke; d. 1 Dec 1949, Brasher Falls, NY; m. Edward Morse, 3 Jan 1879.


21. Ibid.


29. Find a Grave, Benjamin Albert Rolfe, Memorial ID 80463461.


39. New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829-1940, (FamilySearch.org, index to marriage records from New York City including Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens, and Richmond boroughs), Certificate Number 19598, GS Film Number 1613232, Edna Letitia Britton m. Van Dyke Charlier, 29 Aug 1911, Manhattan, New York, NY.

40. New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949, (FamilySearch.org, index to New York municipal death records from the five boroughs; New York City (Manhattan) 1795-1949, Bronx 1898-1948, Brooklyn 1847-1949, Queens 1898-1949, and Richmond 1898-1949), GS Film Number 1323332, Digital Folder Number 004002120, Image Number 01324, Indexing Project (Batch) Number B04137-8, Record Number 151, Certificate Number 4984, Bertha E. Evans, d. 13 Feb 1913, Manhattan, New York City, NY.


52. Find a Grave, Frederick J. Wallbaum, Memorial ID 203602274.

53. 1880 United States Federal Census, Brasher Falls, St Lawrence, NY, Roll 925, Enumeration District 190, Dwelling 137, Family 142, p. 33D, lines 17-21.

54. Find a Grave, Benjamin Rolfe, Memorial ID 89919645.


57. Cemeteries of St. Lawrence County, New York, (FamilySearch.org, records by County Clerk of St. Lawrence County, NY, Manuscript/Manuscript on Film, Salt Lake City, UT: Filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1968), Towns of Brasher, Canton, Film 556599, DGS 008098405, image 82 of 279.

59. 1900 United States Federal Census, Brasher, St. Lawrence, NY, Enumeration District 0077, FHL microfilm 1241156, Dwelling 10, Family 11, p. 1, lines 31-34.


62. 1900 United States Federal Census, Brasher, St. Lawrence, NY, Enumeration District 0077, FHL microfilm 1241156, Dwelling 10, Family 11, p. 1, lines 31-34.


64. Find a Grave, Emma H. Ballard Rolfe, Memorial ID 89919644.


67. 1900 United States Federal Census, Brasher, St. Lawrence, NY, Enumeration District 0077, FHL microfilm 1241156, Dwelling 252, Family 257, p. 11, lines 82-86.

68. Find a Grave, Nellie Elizabeth Morse Rolfe, Memorial ID 89919648.

69. New York State, Marriage Index, 1881-1967, Rolfe, Benjamin A., m. 2 Mar 1902, Brasher Falls, NY, Certificate Number 3737; Morse, Nellie E., m. 2 Mar 1902, Brasher Falls, NY, Certificate Number 3737.

70. 1920 United States Federal Census, Queens Assembly District 6, Queens, NY, Roll T625_1237, Enumeration District 443, Dwelling 207, Family 209, p. 10A, lines 24-25.


73. Ibid.


80. Find a Grave, Frederick J. Wallbaum, Memorial ID 203602274.

The Wanderer

Though I have trod the path less travelled,
and ventured where few dare to go,
the heart that grew as I forged my way
now aches for the streets I know.

I yearn to cast my weary eyes
over a simple kingdom all my own,
the modest land in which I reign,
I am going home.

—Tim Shelton
**WHO WE ARE**

The mission of the Rogue Valley Genealogical Society, Inc. is to inspire interest in genealogy, inform and educate the public, and maintain a growing sustainable library with a strong online presence.

The Rogue Valley Genealogical Society (RVGS) is located in Medford, Oregon, in the Rogue River Valley of Southern Oregon. RVGS was founded in 1966 and now owns and operates the Jackson County Genealogy Library (JCGL), which houses the largest collection of genealogical materials in Southern Oregon. Initial settlement in the valley was spurred by a gold strike in Jacksonville, thus accounting for our logo, the happy miner, who represents the activity of digging for gold in genealogy records.

The objectives of the society are as follows:

- to secure information of a genealogical nature from public and private records by way of historical research as well as indexing and abstracting
- to provide for the preservation and publication of results
- to preserve and protect the collection for future generations
- to acquire by gift, purchase or other means, genealogical materials including books, maps, films, fiche, electronic media, documents, records and artifacts of genealogical and historical interest, and to preserve and protect these for future use
- to acquire funds from membership dues, donations, and fees, and to acquire by gift, purchase or other means, personal and real property in order to support the Society’s purposes
- to cooperate and/or affiliate with other nonprofit entities/organizations with like purposes

To accomplish these objectives, RVGS promotes the following activities:

- presentation of programs containing genealogical and/or historical information at general meetings and seminars
- provision of genealogy classes on a range of topics designed for beginners to experts
- publication of an electronic newsletter, the eNews, that outlines society activities and contains genealogical information
- publication of a periodic genealogical journal, *The Rogue Digger*
- expansion of the JCGL collection through volunteer activities such as the Jackson County Cemetery project
- maintenance of the Pioneer and Early Settler Certificate program for descendants of Jackson County Oregon pioneers

**CONTACT US**

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If so, our publication, The Rogue Digger, needs you! The Rogue Digger is a genealogical periodical that reports information helpful to members and researchers by sharing the results of genealogical investigations, especially those related to the Rogue Valley or to our membership. Submissions can be a mere page long or up to 10 pages long, with or without photos or illustrations. If you have an idea but don’t quite know how to pull it together, our editor can advise and help: contact her at caradavisjacobson@gmail.com.

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