

Adams County, Human Interest Newspaper

Columns from Decatur, Indiana, 1905

Natalie Burriss and Kathleen M. Breen

Newspapers exist to bring us the most up-to-date events, and once we have read them, they often hold very little value to us. But to the researcher who is looking for clues to the past, old newspapers can reveal a wealth of information about the people of the past and the events surrounding their lives. The various components of a historical newspaper reveal different kinds of information. News reports give us historical context about the times. Advertisements give us glimpses of what products and styles were popular. It is the social, or human interest, pages, however, that are rich sources of genealogical information. Unofficially yet aptly referred to as “gossip columns,” these notices post the comings and goings of the community’s residents. While we may find some of these entries nosy and intrusive, they serve a very different purpose to the researcher and genealogist. Here we glean valuable information, such as family connections and relationships, along with the locations of origin and current residence.

Knowing these particular facts can help us narrow down or eliminate search results when traversing databases such as those on Ancestry.com. They may also give us footholds in our research. Although genealogy is a study with plenty of uncertainty, if we know for a fact that a person was living in a specific place at a specific time, we can keep our research on the right path.

Today, researchers can find old newspapers online in a variety of sources, from pay-per-view companies such as NewspaperArchive.com to databases provided by local and state libraries, archives, and historical and genealogical societies. Hoosier State Chronicles, a site supported by the Indiana State Library is a great source for historic Indiana newspapers, and it is free to use (<https://newspapers.library.in.gov>).

Below is a selection of goings-on in the town of Decatur, the county seat of Adams County, Indiana. Published in the *Daily Democrat*, this particular column was part of the March 15, 1905, issue. Not only do we see a representation of the city’s residents as they come and go from business or to pay visits to family and friends, but also as they go about their daily lives.

Social Column from the *Decatur Daily Democrat*, March 15, 1905

Charles Bishop, of Portland, was a business caller in the city today.

M. F. Aspy, of Geneva, was in the city today attending to business matters.

Albert Graham, of Monroe, attended to business interest[s] in the city this morning.

Dave [Hunsicker?] went to Roanoke this morning, in the interests of the T. C. Corbett cigar factory.

The Robert Downing company left the city this morning for Portland, where they show this evening.

Cris Strebe went to Portland this morning, where he attended to business for the G. R. & I. railroad company.

Mont Evans returned to the city last evening from Geneva, where he was calling on friends and looking up business matters.

Burt Townsend, after spending last evening in the city with his father, returned [to] his school duties in Fort Wayne this morning.

L. A. Graham returned to the city last evening from Monroe, where he had been adjusting insurance on buildings burned in the recent fire.

G. W. Rupright, Dr. Grandstaff, and William Blakey returned to the city last evening from Hartford township, where they were viewing a big ditch.

John Albright and family returned to their home in Fort Wayne, after being in the city for a few days, the guest of his mother, Mrs. Albright.

Schafer Hardware company were busily engaged yesterday and a part of today loading a car with wire fence, on the Clover Leaf switches. This car will be sent to Willshire this evening, where they will deliver it to customers in that section.

Jerry Coffee went to Fort Wayne this morning, where he received medical treatment for his eyes.

Miss Fanny Rice went to Fort Wayne this morning, where she received her regular music lesson.

John Craig, the [Be?]rne druggist, was in the city for a few hours last evening, looking up old acquaintances.

Mrs. James Thompson returned to her home in Fort Wayne this morning, after being a guest of friends and relatives in the city for several days.

Charles Patterson returned to his home in Terre Haute this morning, after being in the city attending the funeral of his sister, Mrs. Charles Meyers.

Mrs. And Mrs. Harter returned to their home in Indianapolis this morning, after being in attendance of Mrs. Charles [Charles?] Meyers, yesterday afternoon.

Miss Viola Yager of Berne, arrived in the city last evening. She has accepted a position at the U. Dininger millinery store where she began her duties this morning. For the past few months, Miss Yager has been acting in the capacity of society reporter for the News at Berne.

The condition of Mrs. Charles Berry, of Thirteenth street, is reported today as being improved.

L. L. Baumgartner returned to the city last evening from Berne, where he was doing some surveying.

Mrs. M. Henneford, of Vera Cruz, is in the city, a guest of her son, George, and daughter Kate Henneford.

Mrs. Harding, of Indianapolis, arrived in the city last evening, and is the guest of her mother, Mrs. [Subrock/Sohrock].

M. Burns, Gus Gregory, and Earl B. Adams went to Fort Wayne last evening to attend a meeting of the Scottish Rite Masons.

Mrs. Albert Atz reported to her home in Kendallville last evening, after spending a few days in the city the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Atz, of North Second street.

George Ulmer formerly of this city, but now a resident of Mt. Vale, N. J., joined his wife here on a visit with the latter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Peter For[l/h]ing and family.

Deputy Sheriff Gladieux, of Fort Wayne, was in the city today, transacting official business. While here he was the guest of Sheriff Albert Butler.

Mrs. R. B. Smith, of Berne, passed through the city today en-route for Frankfurt, where she will be the guest of her parents for a few days.