

# The Browning Genealogy Databases and Applications

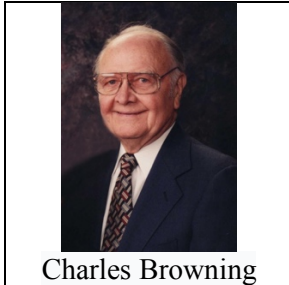
By Cheryl Herrmann

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*Photos provided by the Browning Genealogy Center*

*Part 1: This part is about the history of the Browning Genealogy Database and a description of its collective databases.*

More than an assortment of obituaries, the Browning Genealogy Databases are a century long collection of information, beginning in 1906 and continuing up to present day. It is great resource for the seasoned genealogist and a perfect place to start researching for a beginner.



Charles Browning

After Mr. Charles Browning opened his funeral home in 1954, countless community members approached him seeking information about their deceased loved ones. Immediately, Mr. Browning recognized a deep community need for historical preservation and genealogical records, and he embarked on a project to document the stories of the people and families of Evansville, Indiana.

The initial database was created to provide a searchable index of historical records, saving researchers countless hours of manual work.

In 1999, the Browning records of 3x5 cards were digitized and made available to the public. This allowed the public to easily search for information in the Browning Database free of charge.

In 2005, Browning Genealogy launched its second website, "People Study," chronicling obituaries and local history from additional counties in Southern Indiana, Northwestern Kentucky, and Southeastern Illinois.

In 2024, Browning Genealogy introduced their brand new website, "BrowningGenealogy.org" where they merged all their data and made it safely searchable under one roof.

The Browning Genealogy database was primarily used for researching family and local history in the Evansville, Indiana, area and surrounding counties in southwestern Indiana, northwestern Kentucky, and southeastern Illinois.








The Browning family with the original 3x5 cards

Left to right: Dr. Mark Browning, Rebecca Browning Carter, Jeannie Browning Hester, Charleen Browning Spear

However, one can discover more than obituaries. There are FIVE different databases – Obituaries, Local History, Cemetery Records, Veteran Records & WW II Letters and Immigration Records. The digitized collection *includes images and documents*.

**WHAT YOU CAN FIND IN OUR DATABASES**

 <b>Obituaries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obituaries from Local Newspapers and Funeral Homes</li> <li>• Southwestern IN &amp; Southeastern IL</li> <li>• Northwestern KY</li> <li>• Evansville, IN - Courier &amp; Press</li> </ul>	 <b>Local History</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marriage Engagement, &amp; Birth Records (Evansville, IN)</li> <li>• Local Newspaper Articles (Evansville, IN - 1950s-2010s)</li> <li>• Business Entities (Evansville, IN)</li> <li>• St. Mary's School of Nursing Yearbooks (Evansville, IN - 1930s-1960s)</li> <li>• Deaconess School of Nursing Yearbooks (Evansville, IN - 1930s-1990s)</li> <li>• Bucyrus Erie SCOOPS</li> <li>• DAR Historical Markers (Evansville, IN)</li> <li>• Interstate Finance (Evansville, IN)</li> <li>• Western KY Local History</li> <li>• Over 700 local High School Senior Photos (Vanderburgh, Vanderburgh, &amp; Posey County, IN)</li> </ul>	 <b>Cemetery Records</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rose Hill (Warrick Co., IN)</li> <li>• Snake Run (Gibson Co., IN)</li> <li>• New Salem (Vanderburgh Co., IN)</li> <li>• James Parker (Spencer Co., IN)</li> <li>• Folsomville Cemetery (Warrick Co., IN)</li> <li>• Shiloh Cemetery (Warrick Co., IN)</li> <li>• St. John the Baptist Cemetery (Warrick Co., IN)</li> <li>• Blythe Cemetery (Gibson Co., IN)</li> <li>• Liberty Cemetery (Posey Co., IN)</li> </ul>	 <b>Veteran Records &amp; WWII Letters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posey Co., IN</li> <li>• Pike Co., IN</li> <li>• Vanderburgh Co., IN</li> <li>• Over 3,000 Scans of Original Letters from WW2 Veterans to First Baptist Church Reverend Rake (Evansville, IN)</li> </ul>	 <b>Immigration Records</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warrick Co., IN (1847-1920)</li> <li>• Vanderburgh Co., IN (1847-1920)</li> </ul>
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The Obituaries are a rich source of information for genealogists and historians. They can provide important details that are often difficult to find elsewhere. One of the original purposes of the collection was to index obituary records from Evansville newspapers. The databases are particularly useful for tracing the lineage of people in these specific regions, and the information is compiled from reliable sources like local newspapers and community archives.

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Miller, Mrs A da          69  1-7-65  AlexEast
701 S Weinbach          OH
... died deac hosp

1st Community UCC, Rev R West
Dau o Nile & East Star
husb:  Dr. Minor Miller, former head Vand Co
                    board of health
                    died Nov. 1959

nephews:  Robt Fisher, Cincinnati, Ohio
          Paul Utley, Chicago
          John Harris, Baton Royge, La
niece:  Mrs Mary Keckley, Indianapolis
    
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Sample Obituary card

The Local History database contains a wide range of records related to life events and community history in the Evansville, Indiana, and Tri-State area.


These include Life events like birth announcements, marriage and anniversary notices, yearbooks and high school graduations.

Another part of this database is about community and occupational history, that offers insight into an individual's social life and community involvement. This part included local awards, church and club membership, career promotions and retirements.

Additionally, there are records containing *details* that add color and context to an individual's life story, going beyond basic dates and facts. The Local History records help build family trees and understand ancestral connections.

McGARY, PATTY 50TH Ann(Tom Clark)  
Boonville Courier Press 4-5-2002


**Clark**  
Tom and Patty Clark of Boonville, Ind., plan to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary April 14 from 2 to 4 p.m. at Main Street Baptist Church. Friends are invited. The couple prefer no gifts.  
Clark and the former Patty McGary were married April 9, 1952, in Honolulu.  
They are the parents of Robin Kaiser, Mike Clark and Jan Houston, all of Boonville. They have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Tom and Patty Clark  
Tom Clark retired from Aloca in 1993.

Sample anniversary entry in the Local History Database

HERRMANN, JOHN CARL 20 12-7-47 Johann  
Rd Hermann Rd. Campground Cem  
died Dec. injuries from earlier ca  
acc. at Stringtown & Mill Rd. Mr. Virgil  
Witt driver of other car only shaken up.  
Old North Meth C---Rev. John D. Wolf  
Partner in Herrmann Dairy. Member of Shrine  
drum & bugle corp., Scottish Rite, Head Masonic  
and Stringtown's Men Club  
Parents Mr & Mrs. John I. Herrmann  
sis Mrs. Pauline Baker of Los Angeles  
Mrs. Viola Herrrell, Evansville  
Edwin (Partner in Dairy with him)  
bro  
nieces and nephews  
Dairy founded by grandfather Herrmann



Sample cemetery entry for John C Herrmann

The Cemetery Records are photos and information for nine Indiana cemeteries located in Gibson, Posey, Spencer Vanderburgh, and Warrick counties. For St. John the Baptist Cemetery in Warrick county, there are 1,111 entries. Researchers utilizing this database can do a customized search using the 25 search fields.

The Veteran Records have over 3,000 scans of Original Letters from World War II veterans to First Baptist Church Reverend Rake in Evansville, Indiana.

Also available are select veteran records from Pike, Posey, and Vanderburgh counties.

Readily available veteran records are in the Local History database too.

Hq + Hq Det, 29 Tech Sch Sp.  
26 November 1943

Dear Dr Rake;

I feel that I must tell you about my Thanksgiving. I know that you will understand.

First I want to tell you a little about the weather. It rained all Wed. the 24th. That night it turned into sleet and finally towards morning into snow. It snowed here all day Thanksgiving in a steady down pour. There is a very sharp wind here and snow has drifted into the low places.

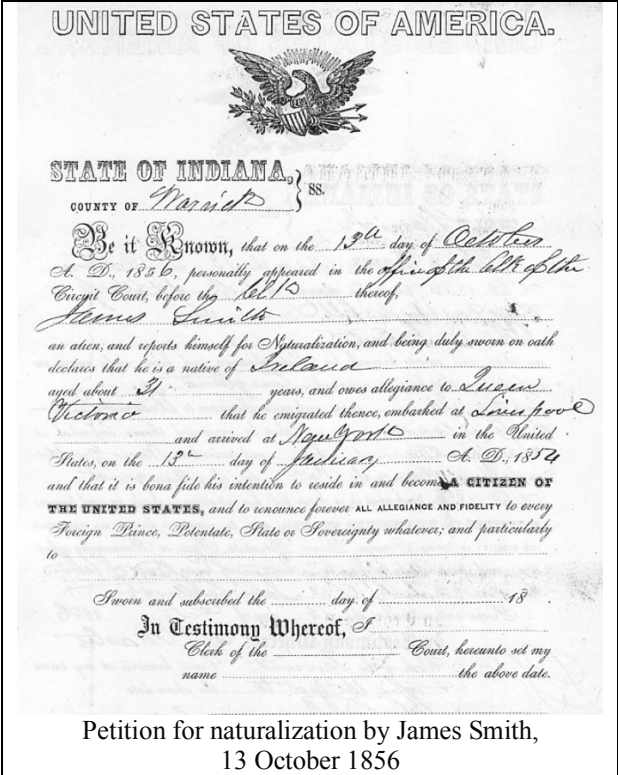
Second I want to set the stage. We, that is myself and some 150 men were detailed that day to Duptons range some 18 miles from camp. We get up at 4 A.M. and are carried out there by trucks. Then after finishing firing we eat our Ration K. and proceed to clean the range up and start for camp at 2 P.M.

Sample letter from World War II veteran

The Immigration Records are Mr. Browning's personal collection of immigration and naturalization records for some immigrants in Vanderburgh and Warrick counties.

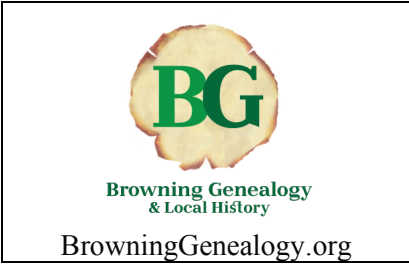
One can also locate the declaration of intention (first papers), the petition for naturalization, (second papers) and the certificate of citizenship as recorded in the county courts.

Note: If a naturalization took place in a Federal court, naturalization indexes, declarations of intention (with any accompanying certificates of arrival), and petitions for naturalization will usually be in the National Archives facility serving the state in which the Federal court is located.



For anyone curious about their local heritage or family connections in the area, the free, publicly accessible databases offer a user-friendly platform to explore history. Build your family tree by searching for relatives who lived in the TriState area.

The ability to search by name saves countless hours compared to sifting through records chronologically. One unique feature of the databases is the “relative search” that allow users to find long-lost relatives by using the advanced search options.



Researching through all the databases allows you to piece together a more complete picture of your ancestors' lives. It is a valuable tool for future generations interested in their family history.

The Browning Genealogy Databases serve as a valuable community archive to ensure the local history of the area is not forgotten. The website is [BrowningGenealogy.org](http://BrowningGenealogy.org).

*Part 2: This part goes beyond searching the obituaries for names, dates and places to other avenues and applications in using the databases.*

The most common genealogy uses of the Browning Genealogy Databases are to build a family tree and find ancestors, obtaining names, dates and places. However, there are more ways to utilize, expand and promote the information obtained from the Browning Genealogy databases.

Here are SIX unique ways to spread out and broaden the results of your research from the databases.

### **1. Genealogy and historical research**

There is more to discover in your genealogy research. A variety of ways on how to incorporate the obituaries and documents from the Browning Genealogy Databases into deeper connections are as follows:

*Discover family relationships:* Obituaries often list the names of surviving relatives (spouse, children, parents, siblings) and deceased ones, sometimes including the married names of daughters. This can be crucial for building family trees.

*Uncover personal details:* Researchers can find information about a person's life, including their hometown, occupation, military service, education, and hobbies. It completes the dash that is between the birth and death years.

*Fill in the gaps:* For periods where official birth or death records are limited, an obituary can serve as a vital substitute record. It can verify family stories or folklore.

*Follow migration patterns:* By checking newspapers in different locations, researchers can trace when and where a person and their family moved.

*Building a digital archive:* Beyond a paper copy, you can scan and digitally archive obituaries, along with other family documents, to preserve them for future family members.

*Adding context to history:* Genealogists often use the detailed information in obituaries to add richness and context to a person's life, going beyond simple dates and names.

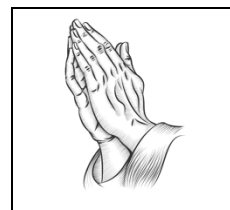
*Oral history projects:* The stories and personal details from an obituary can be a starting point for an oral history project, where family members share their memories and anecdotes.

*Creating a lasting website:* A digital obituary published on a funeral home website or a dedicated memorial site allows friends and family to share photos and comments, creating a more dynamic, interactive memorial.

*Unique life details:* Beyond a list of survivors, contemporary obituaries often include personal anecdotes, favorite quotes, hobbies, and cherished possessions. This creates a richer, more authentic portrait of the person's life.

## **2. For the bereaved,**

As a second use of the Browning Genealogy Databases is in bringing consolation. For those who experience a loss of a family member, finding an obituary for a newly discovered ancestor can bring comfort or relief. Discovering obituaries of ancestors pieces together a family history and understanding of past trials and tribulations of the previous generations. There are several approaches for viewing an obituary.



*Celebration of life:* An obituary can be a touching tribute that paints a fuller picture of who the deceased was by highlighting their personality, unique traits, accomplishments, and passions.

*Grieving and closure:* Reading an obituary can be a therapeutic act that helps family members process their grief by reflecting on their loved one's life.

*Community connection:* Obituaries allow the bereaved to share their loss and connect with friends and acquaintances who also knew the deceased. The condolences and shared memories can provide comfort and support.

## **3. Creating keepsakes and memorabilia**

Preservation is a third way of using the obituaries and the variety of documents, photos and other information from the Browning Genealogy Databases. Instead of letting an obituary or document fade away in a newspaper, you can transform it into a tangible item to preserve the memory.

*Framed or in a shadow box:* Frame the printed obituary, or place it in a shadow box along with other small items that belonged to the person, such as a favorite medal, a small keepsake, or dried flowers from the funeral.



*Scrapbook:* Include the obituary in a scrapbook alongside photographs, certificates, and other mementos to create a detailed family history. Newspaper articles about a promotion, career advancement, marriage announcement, or anniversaries contribute to the flavor of the scrapbook.

*Wood transfer:* Use a special technique to transfer the newspaper text onto a piece of wood, which can then be displayed as a unique piece of art.

*Placemat design:* Create a custom placemat using the obituary text and photos. This allows the family to keep the memory present at the dinner table.

*Laminated bookmark:* Laminate the obituary to protect it and use it as a bookmark in a favorite book, keeping the memory literally in hand.

## **4. Family Reunions**

The Browning Genealogy databases provide resources for locating information about an ancestor or uncovering newspaper articles about them. One unique feature of the databases is the “relative search” that allow researchers to find long-lost relatives by using the advanced search options.

*Themed family reunions or events:* A family reunion can be built around a theme that reflects the deceased member's favorite destination, movie, or food. The event itself becomes a celebration of their life.

**\* Family Reunion \***

*Reunion tributes, Memorial table, Memory books and Family Trees:* During family reunions, organizers set up a table to display memorabilia, documents, newspaper articles, etc. Incorporating these unique, personal tributes makes the remembrance a more meaningful and comforting part of the event for all attendees.

*Storytelling archive:* At a reunion or other event, the organizers can set up a "storytelling" event or station with a notebook or recording device to capture memories and anecdotes from family members. This archive can then be shared or preserved for future generations and reunions.

*Family Reunion Memorial Rocks:* Family members can paint memorial rock with the surname or ancestors' names and place them around the reunion location. Family members can search for the rocks.

*Donations to charity or scholarship:* At a family reunion, one may collect donations to give to the school or a charity that was meaningful to the deceased common ancestor.

## **5. Educational, professional and religious organizations**

The Browning Genealogy databases can save one countless hours of manual work in locating an obituary.

Many *alumni associations or organizations* use obituaries to inform their community of a member's passing, preserve memories, and provide a space for tributes. These organizations often require an obituary for verification purposes and post the information on their websites and in alumni magazines or professional journals.

*Churches and other religious institutions* often announce the death of members and may have their own archives of obituaries.

*Fraternal and social clubs* like the Elks Lodge, Masonic lodges, and other social or professional clubs use obituaries to notify and honor their members.

*Veterans groups:* Veteran organizations will use obituaries to acknowledge the passing of their members.

*Labor unions:* Unions use obituaries as a way to inform their membership through their journals and newsletters about the death of a fellow member.

## **6. College/ High School Reunions**



The Browning Genealogy databases provide resources for locating an obituary of a deceased classmate or uncovering informative newspaper articles about your classmates.

*Reunion tributes, Memorial table, Memory books and directories:* During reunions or other events, alumni associations may set up a dedicated table with framed photos of deceased classmates, often accompanied by lit candles or votives. Class reunions often include a moment of silence, a candle-lighting ceremony, or a reading of names to honor classmates who have passed away. For special events like a reunion, an association may create a memory book that includes a special page dedicated to deceased classmates. Incorporating unique, personal tributes can make the remembrance a more meaningful and comforting part of the event for all attendees.

*Personalized toast:* During a toast at dinner, have several classmates share a short, personal memory of a deceased friend. This allows for a more intimate and heartfelt tribute than simply reading a list of names.



*Plant-able memorial bookmarks:* Give each classmate a special bookmark made with seeds. The list of deceased classmates can be printed on the bookmark. When planted, forget-me-not or other flowers will grow in their memory, providing a lasting, living tribute.

*Donations to charity:* The reunion committee may collect donations from its classmates to give to the school or charities that were meaningful to the deceased alumni.

*Memorial scholarships:* Many associations work with alumni to establish scholarship funds in an alumnus's name.

*Published tributes:* In addition to formal obituaries, associations and former classmates may publish longer-form tributes in alumni magazines, school newspapers, or on blogs.

*Support for families:* Classes may send flowers or cards to the family of the deceased, or send stories and photos collected from classmates.

In conclusion, the Browning Genealogy Databases ([browninggenealogy.org](http://browninggenealogy.org)) is a major, free database specializing in obituaries, vital records, local history, cemetery, veteran and immigration records for Southern Indiana, Southeastern Illinois, and Northwestern Kentucky from 1906 to the present. The site, recently updated, offers extensive, searchable records covering weddings, anniversaries, local awards, veterans information, cemetery records and immigration documents. It is a time saver for many, especially with the “relative search” feature. It’s applications and avenues for use go beyond the initial searchable index for historical documents.

 <p><b>Browning Genealogy &amp; Local History</b> BrowningGenealogy.org</p>	<p><i>The family aims to continue Mr. Browning's legacy through preservation, education, community engagement, and outreach.</i></p>
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### The End