

# Tracing pasts: College records online solve a family mystery

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<http://www.newsherald.com/search/?q=kleback&fistype=site&x=0&y=0>

A recurrent theme in this column is you should never give up. New information can appear at an amazing rate.

Sometimes it is not the very old mysteries that stump us the most. More current research problems also can challenge us.

One of our own family mysteries is my husband's grandfather John Andrew Kleback Jr. Born in either 1880 or 1882, in Hungary/Slovakia or Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, he always has been a puzzle. My husband was only 3 when his grandfather died so he has no personal memories of him. The family only spoke of him in general terms. At the time, I was a new researcher and didn't always know the best questions to ask.

The Kleback family were the owners of a grocery store and tavern in Taylor, Pa., in the early 1900s. The family story is John had gone to Penn State but had fallen in love with a girl back home, one his family didn't approve of. Sometime between 1904 and 1906 they eloped, and even their children never knew for sure when or where they married. (Despite thorough searching, I still haven't found their marriage record. I'm still working on that puzzle.)

Many years ago I had written to Penn State to see what records they might have. I had gotten a few pieces of information from the alumni association, but that was all. I had tried to buy several yearbooks via eBay, but they always sold for more than I could afford. So I had put this research aside and worked on other things.

This morning I was reading Dick Eastman's online newsletter and saw this entry from April 29: "Penn State's La Vie yearbook from 1890 to 2000 is now available online. La Vie, the Penn State University annual student yearbook, has been in production documenting student life continuously since 1890. The project is collaboration between the Penn State University Archives and the University Libraries Digitization and Preservation Department. It features about 51,000 pages of yearbook content."

I hopped right to the site at [www.libraries.psu.edu/digital/lavie/](http://www.libraries.psu.edu/digital/lavie/) and did a search. In the 1909 yearbook I found John's senior picture and school biography. I learned he was on the wrestling team and studied mining engineering. One fascinating fact to me was that "After a year of preparatory work here, he entered college in 1904, but on account of sickness he dropped into the class of 1909." It also mentioned he was probably the only married member of the class.

I can see some great new avenues for further research. I'll also be spending more time searching the site since other family members in both my husband's family and mine attended Penn State. You may find some family members there as well.

This type of digitalization project is going on at many universities and other repositories. If you had relatives who went to college, check the Web sites at the schools to see what might have become available.

You might get the same thrill I did when I found this new site this morning.