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Peoria Writer Receives Grant From President of Roots Television
For *Greenspace Genealogy* Newsletter

PEORIA, Ill. — January 18, 2010 — The weekly newsletter *Greenspace Genealogy* has been awarded a startup grant by [Honoring Our Ancestors](#). The grant will help offset the costs of the first year of weekly distribution.

“I am especially honored to receive this grant,” Judy Rosella Edwards, editor of *Greenspace Genealogy* and Peoria resident said. “HOA founder Megan Smolenyak Smolenyak said she found the *Greenspace Genealogy* project to be innovative. Everyone has a family so finding something ‘innovative’ is a challenge!”

Smolenyak made the front page of [The New York Times](#) for discovering Michelle Obama's roots. She is a popular writer, speaker and TV guest, she serves as [Chief Family Historian](#) and spokesperson for [Ancestry.com](#), the largest genealogical company in the world. She's also President of [RootsTelevision.com](#)

Individuals who donate their land as greenspace have intrigued genealogist Judy Rosella Edwards for more than a decade. *Greenspace Genealogy* is her newly launched newsletter through which she shares the family history of these individuals.

“There are individuals all across the United States who donate their private property to be enjoyed as a public greenspace,” Edwards explains. The first issue of *Greenspace Genealogy* focused on Blenkins Park in Pekin, Illinois. Upcoming issues, listed on the *Greenspace Genealogy* [editorial calendar](#), will cover Beardsley Park in Bridgeport, Connecticut; Ballard Nature Center in Altamont, Illinois; Fort Lane Park in Seminole, Florida; and Yucca House National Monument in Colorado.

“Some donations are ambitious projects consisting of thousands of acres that become recreational areas,” she explains. “Others are corner lots, usually referred to as tot lots. Then there are the conservation and preservation areas, city parks, and county parks. They run the gamut.”

As a professional genealogist, Judy Rosella Edwards says she is inspired to share these stories. She says every time she shares even one of these stories, people ask for more.



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“Most people assume that these families are tycoons and socialites,” Edwards explained. “Margaret Guzy, donated her family farm to the Department of Natural Resources and it is now known as the Margaret Guzy Pothole Wetlands Land and Water Reserve. You may have driven past it on the way to a camping trip at Lake Shelbyville in Central Illinois.”

She went on to explain that Margaret was a hairdresser. Her parents were Polish immigrants who began life in this country where her father found work as a laborer in the Penwell Coal Mine in Christian County, Illinois.

“They all have intriguing stories to tell,” Edwards says. “We don’t often give much thought to why a greenspace is given a certain name. Those names are often the family name of a donor. I find that so much more charming than land that was purchased with tax dollars or taken through eminent domain and then named for someone who had no real connection to the land.”

Edwards is a long-time contributor to [Genealogy Weekly](#) and has worked as a news reporter for three newspapers over the years. She is the Peoria, Illinois, small business writer for [Examiner.com](#) and a contributor to [TellPeoria.com](#).

The *Greenspace Genealogy* newsletter is only available via email. Edwards said, “This grant will make it possible to really get the publication started.” Other efforts include a [YouTube](#) video, a [Facebook](#) page, and [Twitter](#). For more information go to <http://www.tinyurl.com/GreenGen>. “I hope these stories inspire others to donate their private property as greenspace.”

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Judy Rosella Edwards is a professional genealogist and writes for *Genealogy Weekly*. She also writes for Examiner.com, TellPeoria.com, and other freelance publications.

An experienced freelance writer and new media specialist, Judy Rosella Edwards focuses primarily on genealogy and history. She writes regular columns for [GenWeekly](#). She has published several titles in [Holly Lisle's](#) "The 33 Worst Mistakes Writers Make..." series.

She has written for Suite 101's [Museum & History Studies](#), and is a regular contributor to [Helium](#). Edwards is a contributor to the [Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography](#) and is a past presenter at the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's annual [Conference on Illinois History](#).

She holds a Master's degree in Instructional Systems Technology from the College of Education at Indiana University. She lives in Peoria, Illinois, with her husband, Jeff Imig, and their cats.