

“I realized I was from Rochester, too” – Digging Up Hidden Family Roots at the Central Library

To Nancy Bloom, discovering her family genealogy was more than a hobby – it gave her a sense of being rooted in Rochester.

After retiring from Pfizer, Nancy and her husband decided that they wanted to bring their children closer to their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins in Rochester. They moved from Groton, Connecticut, the site of Pfizer’s research headquarters, to Pittsford, just minutes away from her husband’s extended family.

Nancy’s father, who grew up in Buffalo, had mentioned that he thought his family had a connection to Rochester as well, but he had no further information. That passing comment set Nancy on the trail. First stop: the Local History & Genealogy Division of Central Library.

“I was amazed by the resources and the depth of knowledge of the librarians,” Nancy said.

On a librarian’s hunch, before diving into the Library’s databases, Nancy went through a very thick manila folder of old newspaper clippings catalogued under “B.” The next-to-last clipping was a death notice for her great-uncle, Isaac Bloom, the son of Falk Bloom – Nancy’s great grandfather! “I had always thought that my great-grandparents lived and died in Eastern Europe, but the article mentioned that Isaac had come to this country as an infant with his father, Falk.”

“When I read the article, I started to cry,” Nancy said. “I realized I was from Rochester, too.”

Further research with Local History directories and databases allowed Nancy to create a family tree and discover that Falk Bloom and the family had lived on Kelly Street, in the same vicinity as Nancy’s husband’s family. The families may have even known each other.

She also found and visited Falk Bloom’s grave in Mt. Hope Cemetery, a profound experience. “In a real sense, I had roots in Rochester,” she said, “and an immediate connection and sense of responsibility for this community.”

Having caught the genealogy bug, Nancy researched her husband’s family tree as a gift to her mother-in-law for her 90th birthday. She created a photo book with maps of where the family had lived, pictures of census and marriage records and even the names of the boats that brought her mother-in-law’s family to America. She hopes to repeat the process for her own mother in honor of her upcoming 90th birthday.

Nancy feels that genealogy is important for the connection it produces among generations. “To my children, these are names on a piece of paper, until the family begins to tell stories about the people with those names,” she said. “Then it begins to come alive.”

Nancy’s commitment to present and future generations is evident in her philanthropic works in the Rochester community. She co-chairs the Grantmaking Committee of the Rochester Women’s Giving Circle, an initiative of the Rochester Area Community Foundation. This community of philanthropic women combines their financial strength to grant funds to organizations helping women and girls achieve economic self-sufficiency. She and her husband also volunteer for Causewave and other local non-profits, hoping to give back to their shared family home.

Nancy conducted her genealogy research with the help of the dedicated Library staff in the *Walter F. Becker Digital History Center*, part of the Central Library’s Local History & Genealogy Division, established with a generous donation to the **Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library**.



Caption: Nancy Bloom in the Central Library’s Local History & Genealogy Division, holding a copy of the newspaper articles that started her down the genealogy path towards discovering her Rochester roots.