

CLASS

from FRONT

from the two instructors. Watson opened the class with a reminder that genealogy is never truly finished. Family history, he explained, grows not only by tracing ancestors but also by looking sideways at cousins, neighbors and in-laws. Sometimes the answer to one mystery is hidden in the records of another branch of the family.

His first piece of advice was simple: start at home. Old family Bibles, letters, photographs, greeting cards, receipts and other papers often contain valuable clues. Even an old signature, date or place name can help connect generations.

He also encouraged participants to talk with relatives of every age and to listen carefully to family stories. Even tales that seem exaggerated often contain a kernel of truth.

Watson illustrated that point with a story from his own family. He had always been told that one ancestor was an orphan. Further research revealed that the boy's mother had died when he was young, while his father, unable to care for three small children, had them apprenticed to local families. The family story had been true, but only part of the picture until courthouse records filled in the missing details.

Another lesson was to research beyond a direct family line. While many genealogists move from parent to grandparent to great-grandparent, Watson said valuable information is often found by following siblings, cousins and other relatives.

He recalled discovering missing family Bible pages in the Civil War pension file of a distant Blankenship cousin—records he never would have found had he focused only on his own ancestors.

"Don't leave any stone unturned," he advised.

Organization, he said, is just as important as research itself. Every fact should be tied to the document where it was found. Without recording sources, researchers may spend years trying to relocate the same information.

Watson also urged caution when using online family trees. Original documents should always carry more weight than someone else's research, and even unusual names can belong to more than one person. Every discovery should be verified before becoming part of a family history.

He encouraged researchers to revisit records they had already examined because a deed, will or court case may reveal new information once additional family connections become known.

Public records, Watson said, remain one of the greatest tools available to genealogists. He noted that Adair County has been fortunate to preserve courthouse records dating back to 1802, unlike many counties that lost valuable documents to fires.

Among his favorite sources are civil court cases, where lawsuits and depositions often preserve names, relationships and details of everyday life that never appeared in birth, marriage or death records.

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She explained that courthouse records, deeds, wills and vital records often contain the proof needed to connect generations. Kentucky's birth and death records have been maintained since 1911, although access to records varies from state to state.

For people interested in organizations such as the Daughters or Sons of the American Revolution, she explained that every generation between the applicant and the patriot ancestor must be documented through birth, marriage and death records.

Dial encouraged participants to organize those records carefully from the beginning. She described the binders she has created for each of her children, containing certified documents, obituaries, tombstone photographs, deeds, military records and other family items. Each source is carefully cited so future generations will not have to repeat the same research.

Even small keepsakes, she said, may become valuable family history years from now.

She also discussed proper tombstone preservation and

invited those interested to attend a cemetery cleaning class on July 18, where participants will learn safe methods for cleaning historic grave markers.

Following the presentations, the class shifted from lecture to practice. Participants began researching their own families, asking questions and receiving individual assistance from Watson and Dial as they worked through records and family connections.

The morning's lessons centered on several common themes: begin with what is already at home, listen carefully to family stories, explore every possible branch of the family, document every source and never stop asking questions.

For Watson and Dial, genealogy is about far more than collecting names and dates. Every letter, deed, photograph or forgotten courthouse record has the potential to tell part of a family's story.

As Saturday's class demonstrated, discovering those stories takes curiosity, patience and careful research—but every family has a history waiting to be uncovered, one record at a time.

communities attempt to balance economic development opportunities with concerns about infrastructure, utilities and long-term community planning.

Earlier this spring, The Adair Progress examined whether Adair County would even be a realistic location for one of the massive computer server facilities that increasingly power cloud computing, streaming services and the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence. Looking back at those findings, the answer remains largely unchanged: despite the current public debate, the chances of a major data center locating in Adair County appear to be very slim under present conditions.

Unlike a traditional manufacturing plant, a modern data center is essentially a warehouse filled with thousands of computer servers operating around the clock. Those servers generate enormous amounts of heat and require extensive cooling systems, making reliable electricity, water supplies and high-capacity fiber-optic connections the three most critical ingredients in selecting a location.

The numbers involved are staggering: According to the U.S. Department of Energy, data centers accounted for approximately 4.4 percent of all electricity consumed in the United States in 2023. That share is expected to increase dramatically over the next several years, with projections ranging from nearly seven percent to as much as 12 percent by 2028 as artificial intelligence continues to expand. Electrical demand from the industry has already tripled over the past decade.

Water requirements can be equally significant: Many data centers rely on evaporative cooling systems that continually consume fresh water to remove heat from thousands of operating servers. While newer technologies can reduce water consumption, they generally come with substantially higher construction and operating costs. Depending on design and size, large facilities may use millions of gallons of water each day.

When compared with Adair County's existing utility system, those numbers quickly illustrate the challenge. According to the Columbia/Adair Utilities District's most recent annual report, the utility produced or purchased about 744 million gallons of water during 2024 while selling roughly 510 million gallons. That averages about 1.4 million gallons sold each day.

The district also reported a peak pumping day of just over 3.1 million gallons. Even a comparatively modest data center using approximately 300,000 gallons daily would represent more than one-fifth of the county's average daily water sales. A larger facility consuming several million gallons per day would exceed the utility's current peak production levels.

Electricity presents another major obstacle: Federal officials now define many of the newest artificial intelligence data center projects as requiring more than 100 megawatts of additional electrical capacity. Even smaller operations often demand far more electricity than traditional industrial facilities.

While Adair County's industrial parks offer dependable electric service, publicly available

DATA

from FRONT



The enormous amount of energy these centers consume is one of the reasons that do not speak for Adair. (Photo source: Wikipedia)



Our world needs servers to cover the demands of today's internet and AI needs. But Adair County doesn't look like a good home for them. (Photo source: Wikipedia)

development materials do not advertise the type of large-scale transmission infrastructure or excess capacity that major technology companies typically seek. That does not necessarily mean the development could never be developed, but it suggests the county is not currently competing for hyperscale projects.

Location also plays a role: Kentucky continues to market Adair County for industrial development, highlighting more than 200 available acres at Green River Commerce Park, a certified build-ready site, public utilities, natural gas and fiber-optic service. Another industrial property offers convenient access to the Louie B. Nunn Parkway. Those are valuable assets for attracting manufacturers and other businesses.

However, the county remains about 22 miles from the nearest interstate and is fundamentally a rural community rather than a major fiber-optic hub or metropolitan corridor where the nation's largest technology companies have concentrated their investments.

Infrastructure is only part of the equation. One of the biggest misconceptions surrounding data centers is the number of permanent jobs they create.

Construction of a large facility can generate hundreds of temporary positions involving contractors, electricians, equipment suppliers and specialized trades. Once construction is complete, however, staffing requirements decline dramatically.

Many modern data centers operate with only a few dozen full-time employees, relying heavily on automation, remote monitoring and sophisticated computer systems.

Industry studies have suggested that even substantial facilities may employ only 20 to 50 permanent workers on site. Kentucky's own incentive laws recognize that reality by allowing qualifying projects to receive substantial tax incentives while requiring relatively few permanent jobs.

The tax picture is similarly complicated: Kentucky has aggressively pursued data center investments by offering major exemptions

on sales and use taxes for equipment purchases that often represent hundreds of millions of dollars in investment.

Supporters argue those incentives remain worthwhile because the facilities can generate significant property tax revenue and stimulate additional economic activity over time.

Critics, however, point out that exempting much of the expensive computer equipment from taxation reduces the immediate fiscal benefit while communities may still be expected to provide utility improvements and supporting infrastructure.

In recent legislative discussions, state lawmakers have continued debating how to ensure data centers ultimately "pay their own way," particularly regarding electrical infrastructure and other public costs.

For Adair County, those broader statewide discussions come on top of the practical questions surrounding water availability, electric capacity and overall infrastructure.

That does not mean there would be no benefits if a smaller facility were ever proposed. Construction activity could provide a temporary economic boost, and any investment would contribute some level of local tax revenue.

But the image often associated with data centers—a project creating hundreds of permanent jobs while transforming a local economy—does not reflect how most modern facilities actually operate. Taken together, the available information suggests that Adair County remains better positioned to pursue traditional manufacturing, light industry and other businesses that align with its existing infrastructure rather than competing for the largest data center projects now making headlines across Kentucky.

As city and county officials continue discussing possible moratoriums and long-term planning, understanding both the opportunities and the limitations of data center development will likely remain an important part of the conversation.

Historic Cemetery Tour Honors Veterans

Lanterns & Tombstones tour of the Columbia Cemetery will take place this Friday, tomorrow, July 3rd at 7pm. A tour of several veterans' markers will be the highlight of this patriot tour. Veterans on this tour

include one Revolutionary War combat veteran, War of 1812, Mexican-American War, Civil War, World War I, World War II. Come out and take part in this important annual event to honor our veterans.

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