

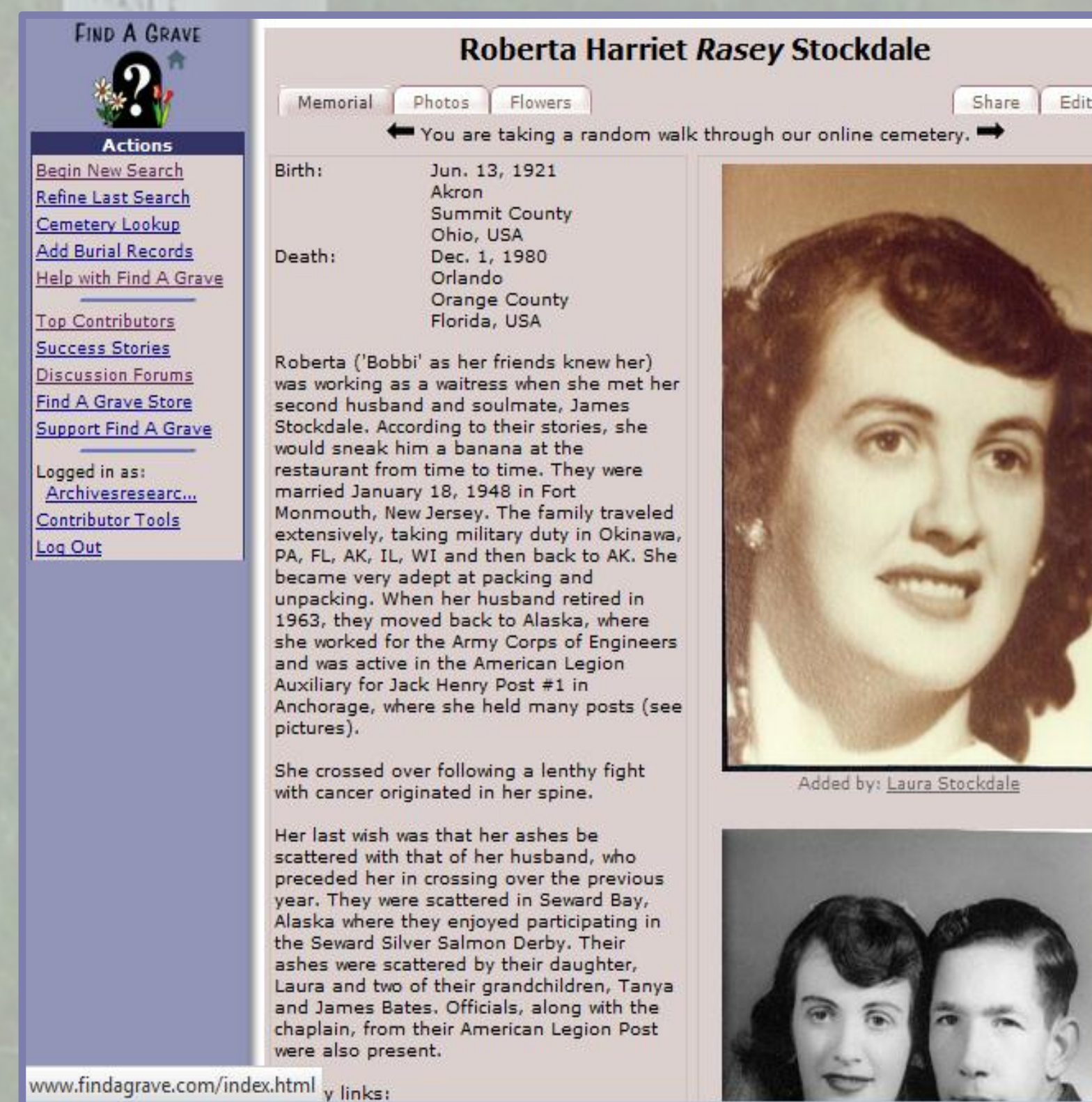
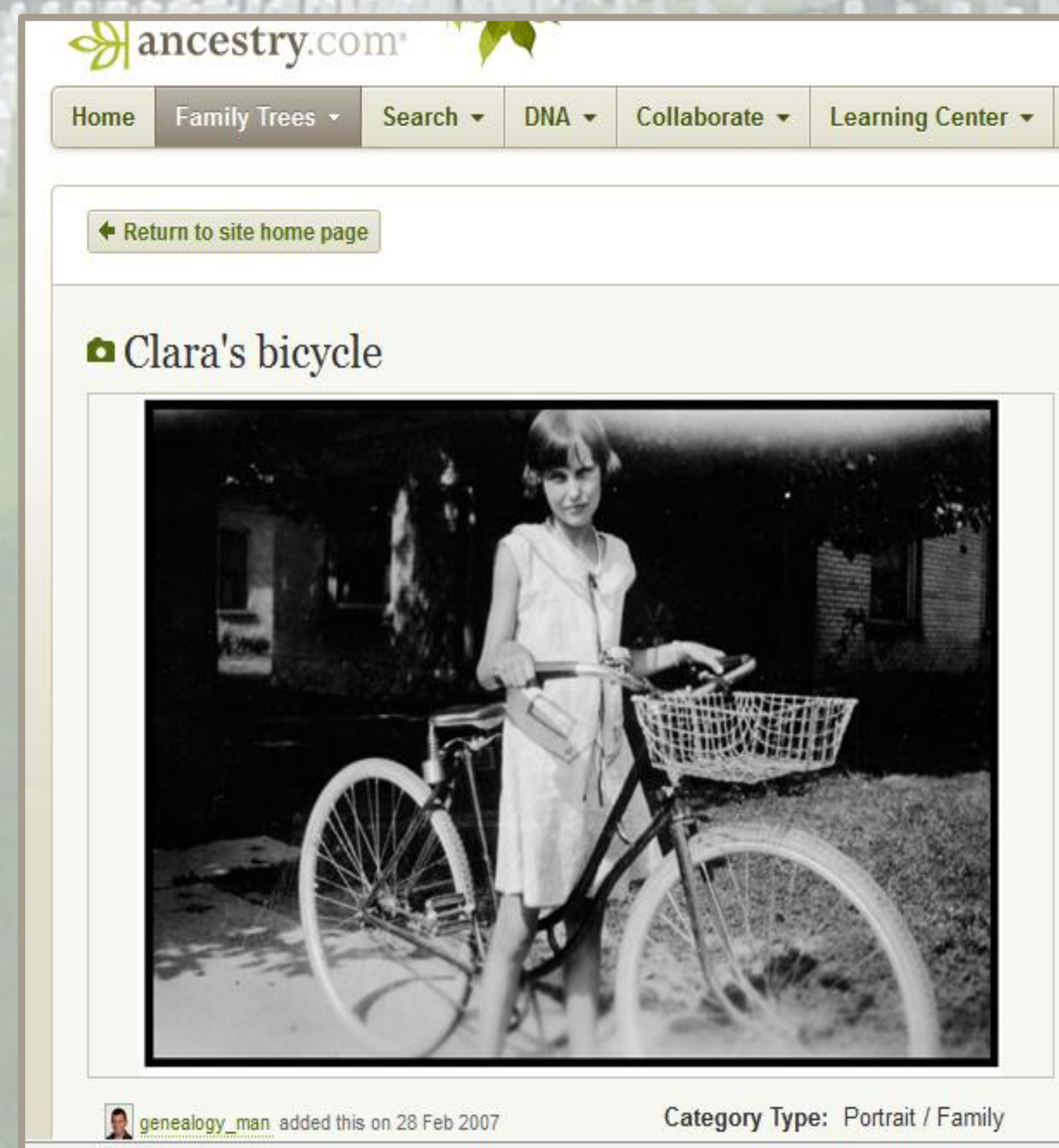
## Crowdsourcing of Family History

- Increasing numbers of family history researchers are collaboratively building virtual content for public consumption
- Collaborative production often results in rich information and primary materials worthy of long-term preservation
- Much of this activity occurs outside traditional memory institutions on commercial and community websites
- If memory institutions want to have a role in curating collaboratively-built content, they need to understand different user production models and practices that will impact and potentially impede future curatorial relationships
- Memory institutions may consider partnering with production communities to develop policies and practices to ensure long-term preservation and accessibility of user content



## Research Method

- Explored production practices and their potential impact on curation through the lens of [Ancestry.com](#) and [Findagrave.com](#)
- Chose these websites due to their prominence, the large number of site contributors, and the historical value of archived material on the sites
- Represents 2 different production models: commercially-mediated vs. community-mediated
- Used a qualitative approach:
  - Interviews of 8 website contributors, identification of emergent themes, and coding of interview transcripts
  - Content analysis of contributor message board posts related to production practices and experiences
  - Analysis of website production guidelines and policies



## Preliminary Findings

### COPYRIGHT POLICIES

- [Ancestry.com](#)'s copyright policy is clearly articulated
- Copyright appears to remain with [Findagrave.com](#) contributors, but there is no official copyright policy

### CONFLICT AND CONTROL

#### *Ownership, Privatization, and Virtual Identity*

- Concern that contributor content on free websites was being copied and placed behind Ancestry's pay wall
- Conflict over who has the right to define virtual identity and who has control over public memorialization of a loved one

#### *Inaccuracy, Inconsistency, and Search/Description Difficulty*

- Editorial controls built into both sites led to conflict between contributors and content inaccuracies
- Findagrave's unclear production guidelines led to content inconsistencies, search difficulties, and community conflict
- Difficulties with choosing "correct" geographical and/or group names due to their changeability over time

## Implications for Memory Institutions

- Contributors want their content to remain free and accessible to others, and public memory institutions are uniquely poised to meet that desire
- Memory institutions interested in curating user contributed content should work with existing contributor communities to:
  - Develop copyright policies that allow third-party curation
  - Establish clear editorial and production guidelines:
    - For consistently structured and less error-prone content
    - To minimize conflict among contributors, decreasing future curatorial and access problems
  - Construct naming strategies for terms that change over time, increasing content accessibility in the short and long terms