



News & Views Newsletter

www.tgstopeka.org

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From the President's Desk - Excitement is in the Air!

I am thrilled to begin my term as president of the Topeka Genealogical Society! I know I have big shoes to fill following the expert leadership of Barbara LaClair, but I hope to serve our membership to the best of my ability. Barbara will continue to serve as past president and in several other capacities, and we owe her a huge debt of gratitude for her experienced guidance and countless hours of service.

I will also continue to serve as the education coordinator for TGS. I am proud of the wide variety of programs we have offered through the generosity of talented genealogists and historians who have volunteered to speak at our monthly membership meetings. I am happy to report that we have another year of exceptional programs planned for 2026. Mark your calendars for the fourth Thursday of each month and join us at 7:00 p.m. in the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library or on Zoom for a series of fascinating lectures.

I hope to expand my efforts to increase awareness of the benefits and services TGS provides to members. Since closing our library, we have rebranded our mission and are promoting our educational activities, social connections, and extensive collection of online records and recordings. We are still here to serve the community and are employing both traditional and innovative methods to interact with members. I have already begun attending area workshops, meetings, and other events where I can share information about TGS services and network with community leaders involved in genealogy and the preservation and promotion of our local history.

I got my start in family history research through my membership in TGS. I will be forever grateful to the members who took me under their wings and helped transform me into a capable genealogist. I am here to pay it forward to anyone I can assist. Please feel welcome to contact me with any questions, concerns, or great ideas you may have. I can be reached at tgstopeka.president@gmail.com



--- Cindy Cruz, President

What's Happening at TGS?

So far, January has been a very busy month! Here are a few highlights:

Library - We had a busy week with TGS members visiting the library to purchase books. Lots of books have gone out the door! Mid-Continent Public Library system sent a truck and a couple of men to pick up the 90+ boxes of books that we are donating to them. We are seeing more empty spaces on the shelves, but still have quite a way to go.

Educational programs – Cindy Cruz has put together a great lineup of Monthly Programs for 2026, and we're offering an Intro to Genealogy Research Class this month. We are adding a new Writing Group for 2026!

Records Preservation Projects – FamilySearch has completed digitization of the Columbian Title Abstract books, and we have received a copy of the digital images. We're looking forward to having the images available on the FamilySearch website in the near future. We have plans for several additional indexing projects and will be offering those to interested volunteers as soon as we can get some of the other activity settled down a bit.

Outreach & Promotion – Cindy Cruz & Barb LaClair made a guest appearance on KTWU's *Inspire* program to talk about genealogy and family history. The show made its debut on January 15th and will air again in upcoming days. If you missed it, it can be viewed on the KTWU website (<https://ktwu.org/productions/inspire/>).



January Joe & Jaw



Books Going to Midwest Genealogy Center



TGS Member Library Book Sale

Free Intro to Genealogy & Family History Class- January 24, 2026

There's still time to register! Are you, or someone you know, interested in learning more about your family history but not sure how to get started or where to look next? We are offering a free "Intro to Genealogy & Family History" class on **Saturday, January 24th, from 9am – 12:30pm**. Class will be held at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. The class is free, and open to the public but we are asking that those who plan to attend register in advance so that we can be sure to have enough space and materials for everyone. See the event listing on our website to register. <https://tgstopeka.org/events/#!event/2026/1/24/introduction-to-genealogy-and-family-history-class>



News from the Topeka LDS Family History Center



Renee Aldrich, Director of the Topeka Latter Day Saints Family History Center, has reported that they have expanded their hours and now have six computers available for patrons. They will be adding Sunday afternoon hours from 2:00 - 5:00 starting in February. The current hours are posted on their website. The Family History Center is located at 2401 SW Kingsrow Rd.

New Special Interest Group for 2026!

We are excited to announce that we are adding a new **"Story Finders" Writing Group** for 2026. Terry Stahl and Phyllis Ericson are teaming up to lead this group, and are making some great plans to encourage group participants and help them feel more comfortable in writing their family stories. The group will meet in person, on the 3rd Friday of each month from 10:00am to noon in the Anton room at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. Through shared writing prompts and thoughtful conversation, they hope to transform small moments into lasting stories for future generations. Join the group, and make sure that your family history research is shared for generations to come!



Welcome, New Members!



We want to extend a warm welcome to new members who have recently joined our organization. We hope that you will take full advantage of everything that we have to offer, and don't hesitate to let us know if we can assist you in your family history quest!

- Linda Stout – Bartlesville, OK
- Bryan Jones – Topeka, KS

Help us continue to grow our membership by telling your friends about us, and inviting them to check us out. Word of Mouth is the best advertising!

New on Our Website: <https://tgstopeka.org>

Updates and new content are added to our website on an ongoing basis. So that you don't miss anything, here are highlights of changes and new additions in the past month.

- **New program recordings** added (in the Past Programs section):
 - December 2025 Foundations of Family History SIG – Newspapers, by Barb LaClair
- **Resources** – none added this month



There are now more than 50 recordings of past TGS programs and presentations available on our website! Access to some content is restricted to members; to gain full access, we invite you to visit the membership page on our website, and become a member today!



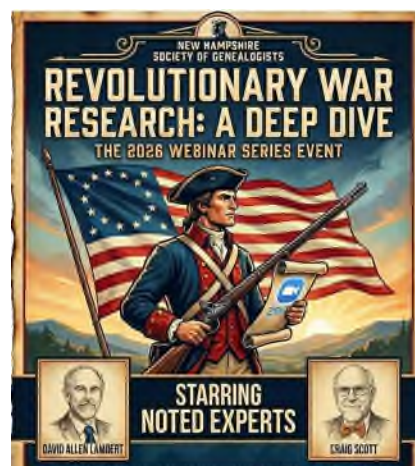
The New Hampshire Society of Genealogists' upcoming 2026 special virtual programs by noted experts David Allen Lambert and Craig Scott are just one of the benefits of NHSG membership. Join for access to all this year's webinars for \$25. For details see

<https://www.nhsog.org/webinars>

All webinars will take place at 7pm (Eastern Time), via Zoom.

Programs included in this series, and their dates:

- January 12 – “*Colonial Wars in New England*,” by David Allen Lambert
- **February 9** – “*Records Created by the War*,” by Craig Scott
- **March 9** – “*Pensions*,” by Craig Scott
- **May 11** – “*Bounty Land*,” by Craig Scott
- **September 14** – “*Loyalists and Hessians*,” by Craig Scott
- **November 9** – “*Lineage Societies*,” by David Allen Lambert



UPCOMING TGS EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

There is always something happening at TGS. Check the events calendar on our website

(<https://tgstopoka.org/events/#!event-list>) frequently to get more details on what's coming up and how you can participate!



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs):

These informal groups meet on a monthly basis for information sharing and learning around a topic or area of shared interest. Participation is free, and open to the public. Refer to the events listings on our website for information about how to register and participate in each group.

(Some of the upcoming programs are still in the planning stage - check the events calendar on our website for more details as they become available)

- **Foundations of Family History SIG** (2nd Tuesday evening, 7pm (Central Time), via Zoom).
 - **February 10, 2026** – Topic to be announced
 - **March 10, 2026** – Topic to be announced
- **Brick Wall Problem-Solving SIG** – (3rd Tuesday morning, 9:30am). Odd months are virtual, via Zoom. Even months in person at a local research facility)
 - **January 20, 2026** – (Online, on Zoom) We will study a few examples of common types of records that are easy to find on free websites and discuss how we can extract the most information from each one. Then we will brainstorm how to use each piece of information, or "What's Next?" in our research. We hope to give some practical examples that each of you can apply to your own genealogy research.
 - **February 17, 2026** - Research on-site at the Topeka & Shawnee Co. Public Library
- **DNA/ Genetic Genealogy SIG** – Paula Smith is taking over as group leader, and the focus will be shifting slightly to more intro-level topics. (1st Tuesday, 10:30-11:30am, via Zoom)
 - **February 3, 2026** – Intro to DNA for Genealogists
 - **March 3, 2026** – Getting Your DNA Results
- **New for 2026! TGS "Story Finders" Writing Group** - (3rd Friday, 10:00am – noon, in person at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Anton Room on the 2nd Floor)
 - **February 20, 2026** – Getting Started
 - **March 20, 2026** – Your Memory Has a Story

MORNING JOE & JAW – (1st Monday morning each month, 9:30am at Perkins Restaurant, Topeka)

Monday, February 2, 9:30 - 11am

Monday, March 2, 9:30 – 11am

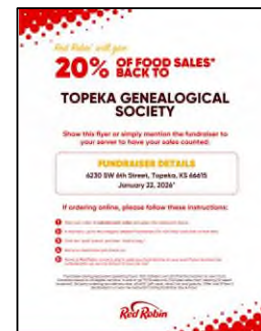


This is an informal opportunity for socializing and networking with other members. Meet us at **Perkins Restaurant, 1720 SW Wanamaker**, for some lively conversation while you enjoy a morning coffee, pastry, or breakfast. No need to register – just drop by to say hello!

MONTHLY DINNER GATHERING/ FUNDRAISER

(We gather informally at a designated local restaurant prior to the monthly program for an opportunity to socialize. A percentage of total sales at the restaurant will be donated to TGS.)

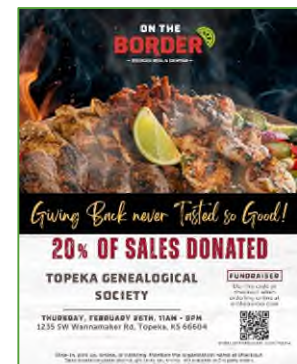
January 22, 2026, 5:00pm - Please join us at 5:00pm on January 22nd for our monthly fundraiser at Red Robin for some good food and lively conversation. If you cannot join us then, you have the option of dining anytime between 11:00am-10:00pm, or ordering online or in person for carryout. Mention this fundraiser or show them the attached flyer at the checkout register for TGS to receive 20% of sales benefit. Following dinner, join us at TSCPL at 7:00pm for our monthly program. We look forward to seeing you!



Download the Flyer: <https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Jan-2026-Red-Robin-TGS-fundraiser-flyer.png>

February 26, 2026, 5:30pm - Our February 2026 dining out/fundraiser will be at On the Border, 1235 SW Wanamaker. TGS will receive 20% of total sales to our group. Order online, for takeout or in-person dining any time between 11am and 9pm. For those who would like to join us in person, we will plan to gather at 5:30pm. Following dinner, please join us at 7:00 pm at the TSCPL for our monthly program presentation by Tom Schmidt about the "Kansas Save the Flags Project."

Download the Flyer: https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/On-The-Border_Feb2026.png



MONTHLY PROGRAMS – 4th Thursday of the month, 7pm at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. Attend in person, or watch online via Zoom. Participation is free, and open to the public. To obtain the Zoom link to watch online, see the event listing on our website (<https://tgstopeka.org>).

January 22, 2026, 7:00pm - **“Life in Kansas During the Dust Bowl”** by Katie Keckeisen

Black Sunday – April 14, 1935 – is an unforgettable moment in history. The photographs from that day of the dust storm in southwest Kansas made headlines across America. How did Kansans respond to this challenging moment in history? Using eyewitness accounts and photographs, Katie will explore the impact and the legacy of the drought and the “Dust Bowl” on life in Kansas during the 1930s and beyond. This lecture is sponsored by the Humanities Kansas Speakers Bureau.



February 26, 2026, 7:00pm – **“Kansas Save the Flags Project,”** by Tom Schmidt

Kansas furnished more soldiers in proportion to its population than any other state during the Civil War. Each unit had courageous men who carried flags into battle in front of the troops. The flag bearers were thus the first men the enemy targeted. Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War member, Tom Schmidt, will share the stories of some of these brave men and 75 flags which they carried and now await preservation in the Kansas Museum of History.



UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS



RootsTech 2026 – March 5-7, 2026. Attend online (Free) or in-person. Registration is now open! See <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/> for details.
