



News & Views Newsletter

www.tgstopeka.org

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From the President's Desk –

You're Invited! RootsTech 2026! Have you registered for RootsTech 2026? If not, it's time to go to the FamilySearch RootsTech website and prepare to participate in the world's largest family history conference from the comfort of your favorite chair! Sign up now at this link! <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/>



RootsTech is a hybrid event with live sessions in Salt Lake City and both live and recorded sessions available online from the event website. A plethora of classes (with downloadable/printable handouts) will be offered during the March 5 – 7 conference and many of them will be available for viewing all year long. You can search for lectures on your favorite topics and even create a playlist to watch at your leisure. Optional features of the event are online chats with attendees from around the world and an app called "Relatives at RootsTech 2026" that identifies any of your relatives who are also registered.

New technology is often unveiled at RootsTech, too. A virtual exhibitor's hall offers a peek at the latest website subscriptions and products to support your family history research. Look for innovative new features on Ancestry, Family Search, My Heritage, and other large genealogy website providers. Many of the exhibitors offer discount codes during the event and some give away free merchandise in door prize drawings. I won a free DNA kit last year!

And wait – there's more. Topeka area folks are invited to a RootsTech live Watch Party on Friday, March 6, from 9am - 5pm at the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library. The public library and the local FamilySearch Family History Center are co-sponsors of the party. Registered participants can choose between two presentations for each time slot in the day's schedule and food will be provided during the event. We hope lots of our TGS members will attend and join in the fun! Links to details and registration are included in the events listings below.

--- **Cindy Cruz, President** , tgstopeka.president@gmail.com

What's Happening at TGS? As always, we've been busy!

Library - We are seeing more empty spaces on the shelves, but still have quite a way to go. We're taking a short break, and will soon begin negotiations with Internet Archive to determine what materials they will accept and what the process will be for transferring them.

Educational programs – Cindy Cruz has put together a great lineup of Monthly Programs for 2026. The Foundations of Family History, Brick-Wall and DNA Special Interest Groups are ongoing, and we are adding a new Writing Group for 2026! New TGS member Phyllis Ericson (coming to us from the Lincoln-Lancaster Genealogical Society) has generously invited TGS members to participate in a series of webinars that she has developed about British and U.K research. As you can see from the event listings section of this newsletter, learning (and socializing) opportunities abound!

Records Preservation Projects – Significant progress has been made on the Columbian Title Abstract books project (see details below). 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 – We've been out and about promoting interest in Family History and telling folks about TGS. This month, Barb LaClair gave a presentation to a local PEO chapter and Cindy Cruz spoke to a genealogy group at Aldersgate.

Update on the Columbian Title Abstract Books Project

We are nearing the end of this huge Records Preservation project. As many of our long-term members know, TGS inherited more than 800 oversized volumes of records created by the Columbian Title Abstract Company. The one-of-a-kind books contain a literal goldmine of valuable information. In addition to documenting real property transfers, they also include references to marriages, divorces, probate proceedings (including transcriptions of wills and lists of heirs), bankruptcies and more. Over the past 20+ years, numerous TGS volunteers have helped to create an index to the books. The physical volumes had been stored in the TGS library. Within the past year, we made arrangements with FamilySearch to digitize the records and have the digital images published on the FamilySearch website.



Substantial progress has been made - the indexing process has been completed, digitization of the books has been completed, and some of the images have been published on the FamilySearch website (more to come). We are currently experimenting with and testing a system for publishing a searchable version of the index on the TGS website. When everything has been completed, a researcher will be able to search the index on the TGS website, and then be referred to the location on FamilySearch where the image from the record book can be viewed. We are really proud of this accomplishment, and pleased that we have been able to preserve these records and make them widely accessible to researchers everywhere!

AMERICA



A National Archives traveling exhibition is bringing seven original Founding-era documents to eight U.S. cities in commemoration of America's 250th anniversary in 2026, and they will be just down the road from us

at the WWI Museum in **Kansas City, MO, March 6-March**

22!. Inspired by the Bicentennial Freedom Train, the Freedom Plane National Tour will make documents fundamental to America's founding accessible to Americans across the country. Visitors will have the opportunity to view seven original historic documents related to the founding of our Nation, from the holdings of the National Archives. For more details or to get tickets, see:

<https://www.theworldwar.org/exhibitions/freedom-plane-national-tour-documents-forged-nation>



By the People: Volunteer to Help and Learn About Every-Day Life During the Revolutionary War Era –

AMERICA



Have you heard? 2026 marks the 250-year anniversary of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and America is celebrating! With their “*By the People*” project, the Library of Congress is offering a great opportunity to get involved and to learn more about every-day life during the Revolutionary War era. Project volunteers can help to transcribe various Revolutionary-Era documents that will shed light on daily life at the time, as well as to help to improve access to the information. To learn more, see the project website, <https://crowd.loc.gov/topics/american-revolution/> .

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!

- Kim Phillips – Leawood, KS
- Connie Tilton – Berryton, KS
- Debbie Barnes – Humble, TX

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):
 - o January 2026 Foundations of Family History SIG – *New Years Resolutions: Getting Organized*, 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 recorded 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!

UPCOMING TGS EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

There is always something happening at TGS. Check the events calendar on our website (<https://tgstopeka.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).
 - o **March 10, 2026** – “Finding Their Stories”
 - o **April 14** - Topic to be announced
 - o **May 12** - 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)
 - o **February 17, 2026** - Research on-site at the Topeka & Shawnee Co. Public Library
 - o **March 17, 2026** – Zoom meeting, topic to be announced
 - o **April 21, 2026** - Research on-site at a local facility
- **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)

- o **March 3, 2026** – Getting Your DNA Results
- o **April 7, 2026** – Topic to be announced
- **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)
 - o **February 20, 2026** – Getting Started
 - o **March 20, 2026** – Your Memory Has a Story: A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words
 - o **April 17, 2026** – Discover What You Forgot: Make a Map of a place that mattered
 - o **May 15, 2026** – Discover What You Forgot: Find a Story Within a Timeline

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

Monday, March 2, 9:30-11am

Monday, April 6, 9:30-11am

Monday, May 4, 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.)

February 26, 2026, 5:00pm - 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 5:00pm. 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



March 26, 2026, 5:00pm - Our March 2026 dining out/fundraiser will be at **Jason's Deli, 6121 SW 12th St**. TGS will receive 20% of total sales to our group. Order online, for takeout or in-person dining any time between 10am and 8pm. For those who would like to join us in person, we will plan to gather at 5:00pm. Following dinner, please join us at 7:00 pm at the TSCPL for our monthly program presentation by Brian Vazquez, "Patriots Remembered: Tracing Legacy with the Sons of the American Revolution"

Download the Flyer: <https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Jasons-Deli-Fundraiser-Flyer.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>).

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.



March 26, 2026, 7:00pm – “*Patriots Remembered: Tracing Their Legacy with the Sons of the American Revolution*,” presented by Brian Vazquez

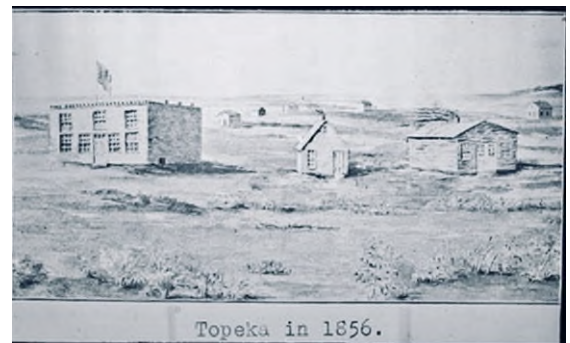


AMERICA Brian Vazquez, President of the Topeka Thomas Jefferson Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, will present an enlightening program about the SAR lineage society. He will talk about the SAR mission to honor Revolutionary War ancestors, preserve historical records, promote civic education, and demonstrate how the society website can be used to find information about patriots and descendants. Members of the Topeka Thomas Jefferson Chapter of SAR will be on hand to answer your questions.



April 23, 2026 – “*Topeka’s Constitution Hall*”

Kansas was first envisioned as a free state in the fall of 1855 when the Topeka Constitutional Convention met in Constitution Hall. Renovation of the historic building was recently completed, and it now serves as a reminder of important role Kansas played in the antislavery movement leading to the Civil War. Join us to learn more about the fascinating history of this Topeka treasure.



UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

Monday, March 2, 2-3pm on Zoom – **Researching Your Colonial War Ancestors Before 1775**, virtual program hosted by the **Midwest Genealogy Center** and presented by **David Lambert**.



AMERICA Before the American Revolution, the 13 colonies were faced with many military struggles. David Allen Lambert will discuss the records available for military research from the 17th century to the era before the American Revolution. This program will be held virtually using Zoom. Registration with a valid email address is required to receive the Zoom link.

Register here: <https://www.mymcpl.org/events/114847/researching-your-colonial-war-ancestors-1775-zoom>

Friday, March 6 – **RootsTech Watch Party**, co-hosted by the **Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library** and the **Topeka LDS Family History Center**. 9:00am – 5:00pm, at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library



Come together with other genealogy enthusiasts to view a selection of online sessions curated from the hundreds of sessions being offered at RootsTech in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Sessions start at 9am, 10:30am, 12pm (General Session), 1:15pm and 4pm. See the day's schedule here: <https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/RootsTech-Watch-Party-Schedule.pdf>

Free, but registration is required. **Register here:** <https://tscpl.libnet.info/event/15824651>

Saturday, March 28 – **Genealogy Open House and Resource Fair**, presented by the Johnson County Genealogical Society and the Johnson County Library

Connect to your past and drop in for a day of discovery to begin your family research journey. Tour the genealogy area, learn about the Library and Society resources, pick up forms and information, and get one-on-one help from Society members. Attend sessions on Getting Started in Genealogy, Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.com, and Military Research. Learn about software to keep your research organized. See the Memory Lab in action for digitizing pictures, documents, etc. Visit genealogy-themed group exhibits in between these wonderful sessions! Detailed Schedule is attached. To see details and the full schedule:

https://jcgsk.org/upload/files/SCHEDULE_OF_EVENTS_Mar_28%2C_2026_v1.19.2026.pdf



Saturday, April 18 - Midwest Genealogy Center's Spring Seminar: Branches and Bytes, with Steve Little & Mark Thompson

AI tools are transforming genealogy, but where do you start?

Join Mark Thompson and Steve Little, co-hosts of the *Family History AI Show* podcast, for an engaging seminar that cuts through the confusion and shows you how to use AI tools to become a better researcher and storyteller.

Registration fee: \$40

For details or registration link:

<https://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/programs/spring-seminar> .



Friday-Saturday, August 7 & 8, 2026 - MOSGA (Missouri State Genealogical Association) Annual Conference, Jefferson City, Missouri

SAVE THE DATE! For more details as they become available, check the MOSGA website: <https://mosga.org/eventListings.php?nm=67>



Saturday, August 15, 2026 – Genealogy KC

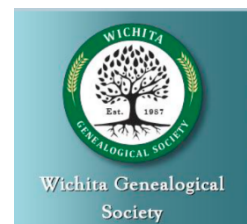
SAVE THE DATE! A free, full-day genealogy event, hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Registration is set to open March 1st.

For details and registration info as they become available: <https://genealogykc.org/genealogy-kc-2026-1>



Saturday, October 10, 2026 – Wichita Genealogical Society Annual Conference

SAVE THE DATE! For more details as they become available, check the WGS website: <https://wichitagensoc.org/>



UPCOMING NATIONAL EVENTS

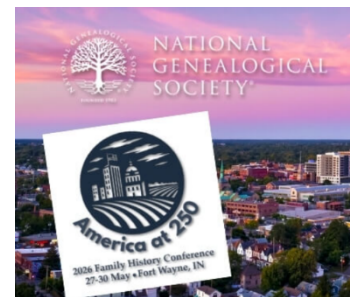


RootsTech 2026 – March 5-7, 2026. Attend online (Free) or in-person. Registration is now open! See <https://www.familysearch.org/en/rootstech/> for details.

May 27-30, 2026 - NGS (National Genealogical Society) 2026 Family History Conference, in Fort Wayne, Indiana

The National Genealogical Society's annual conference—a pinnacle of the genealogical calendar—will take place 27-30 May 2026 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, home to the renowned Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library.

In recognition of the Semiquincentennial Anniversary of the signing of United States Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776, our theme is ***America at 250***. The conference will shine a light on the stories, communities, and research strategies that help us understand the nation's past. It also will focus on how genealogists can preserve our family histories for the future.



There are options to attend in person, or virtually. For details and registration information: <https://conference.ngsgenealogy.org/>