



News & Views Newsletter

www.tgstopeka.org

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From the President's Desk – Rediscovering 1776: Locating Ancestors and Their Lives in Colonial America

As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, researching where your ancestors lived and how they were employed in 1776 can become a powerful way to connect personal family stories with the broader sweep of American history.

Free platforms like FamilySearch provide access to billions of historical documents and location-based search tools that help place ancestors within the geography of the thirteen colonies. By combining military, civil, church, and land records, researchers can reconstruct where their ancestors stood in 1776—whether they were soldiers, farmers, artisans, enslaved people, merchants, or community leaders—and honor their role in the nation's founding era. These documents can reveal where a family worshipped, the land they owned or leased, the trades they practiced, and the networks of neighbors and associates who shaped their daily lives.



The June 25th TGS meeting at the public library at 7:00 p.m. promises to give you a jump start on this topic. TGS member, Phyllis Ericson, will present **“Who Were Your Ancestors in British Colonial America? Finding Our Colonial Ancestors, 1607-1775.”** Phyllis is well versed in colonial research and has led the British Interest Group in the Lincoln-Lancaster County Genealogical Society for ten years. Please join us in person or by Zoom to learn more and feel free to bring your questions for the Q&A session following Phyllis' program.

<https://tgstopeka.org/events/#!event/2026/6/25/monthly-program-details-coming-soon>

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

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!

- Laura Baer – Burlingame, KS
- James Lewis Friar – Los Alamos, NM

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):
 - **Tech Resources in the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library for Genealogists**, by Liz Frazier
- **Resources & Records** – none added this month, but we're working on some cool ones!



There are now more than 50 recordings of past TGS programs and presentations available on our website! Access to most 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!

Finding Freedom: A Douglas County 250 Experience



How did the promises of 1776 reach the Kansas frontier? While the Declaration of Independence was signed in Pennsylvania, its core concepts of equality and unalienable rights were fought for here in Douglas County.

Join us for a county-wide journey exploring the complex reality of securing freedom for all. From the "Bleeding Kansas" era of the 1850s to the Civil Rights milestones of the 1960s, this digital pass serves as your exclusive guide to the multi-museum exhibition: ***Finding Freedom: The Promise of 1776 in Douglas County.***



See <https://www.explorelawrence.com/passports/finding-freedom-a-douglas-county-250-experience/> for details and how you can participate.



AMERICA 250 CAPITOL LAWN CONCERT with TOPEKA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

will be a special outdoor concert commemorating America's 250th on **July 2 from 7 to 8 p.m.** This concert is free to attend and spectators are asked to bring their own lawn chairs. Afterwards, spectators are invited to enjoy the America 250 Trail Walk, weaving through Downtown beginning at the Docking State Office Building.

Are You Researching Shawnee County Ancestors?

Opportunities abound! We are fortunate to have so many great resources and repositories available. Here's a summary:

- Download our **Guide to Shawnee County Research**, which summarizes available records and where to find them (https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Shawnee-Co-Research-Guide_2024-Update.pdf).
- Check out our online, **searchable databases**, which include more than 365,000 records. (<https://tgstopeka.org/search-our-databases/#/search>)
- Check out our numerous **links to Shawnee County resources** found on other websites (<https://tgstopeka.org/resources/links-to-sn-co-resources/>)
- Visit the **Topeka Room and Baker Genealogy Center at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library**, 1515 SW 10th. Hours are M-F: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Sat: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Sun: Noon to 9 p.m. (<https://tscpl.org/local-history-genealogy>)
- Visit the **Archives of the Kansas Historical Society**, 6425 SW 6th, or check out their online genealogy indexes (<https://www.kansashistory.gov/p/genealogy-indexes/18943>) Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday - Friday; 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Saturday
- Check the online resources at **Kansas Memory** (<https://www.kansasmemory.gov/>), hosted by the Kansas Historical Society
- Visit the **Topeka FamilySearch Center** at 2401 SW Kingsrow. Hours are Sunday 1 to 4; Tuesday and Wednesday 9 to noon and 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

If you don't live nearby and need some assistance, we will be happy to help. See Research Assistance information on our website: <https://tgstopeka.org/research-assistance/>

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, 7 p.m. (Central Time), via Zoom).
 - o **July 14, 2026** – The Dawes Rolls
 - o **August 11, 2026** – Researching in an Unfamiliar Location
- **Brick Wall Problem-Solving SIG** – (3rd Tuesday morning, 9:30 a.m.). Odd months are virtual, via Zoom. Even months in person at a local research facility)
 - o **July 21, 2026** – Zoom meeting. “Black & White & Red All Over; Newspaper Research”
- **DNA/ Genetic Genealogy SIG** – Paula Smith has taken over as group leader, and the focus is shifting slightly to more intro-level topics. (1st Tuesday, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., via Zoom)
 - o **July 7, 2026** – Topic to be announced soon
- **TGS “Story Finders” Writing Group** - (3rd Friday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, in person at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, Anton Room on the 2nd Floor)
 - o **June 19, 2026** – *Write a Story for an Ancestor You Remember*
 - o **July 17, 2026** – *Write a Story for an Ancestor You Didn't Know*

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

Monday, July 6, 2026, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

Monday, August 3, 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

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!

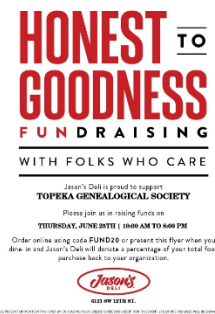


MONTHLY DINNER GATHERING/ FUNDRAISER

(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.)

June 25, 2026, 5:00 p.m. - Join us at 5:00 p.m. for our monthly fundraiser at **Jason's Deli, 6121 SW 12th Street**, for some good food and lively conversation. If you cannot join us then, you have the option of dining anytime between 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. or ordering online or in person for carryout. Show them the flyer at the checkout register, or use the code **FUND20** when ordering online for TGS to receive 20% of total sales. Following dinner, join us at TSCPL at 7:00 p.m. for our monthly program. *“Finding Our Colonial Ancestors, 1607-1775.”*

Download the Flyer: <https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Jasons-Deli-Fundraiser-Flyer.png>



MONTHLY PROGRAMS – 4th Thursday of the month, 7:00 p.m. 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>).

June 25, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – “*Finding Early Colonial Ancestors, 1600-1700s*” by Phyllis Ericson

AMERICA Who Were Your Ancestors in British Colonial America?
 TGS member, Phyllis Ericson, will explore our ancestors' lives in the British Colonies before the Revolutionary War. She will discuss how to find them in colonial records and share what we know about our early colonists in the 1700s.



July 16, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – “*From Fjords to Frontiers: Finding Your Nordic Emigrants Journey*”, by Phyllis Ericson

TGS members are invited to participate in this zoom program that Phyllis Ericson is providing for the Lincoln-Lancaster Genealogical Society.

Piece together the immigration stories of your ancestors using parish "moving-in and -out" records, passenger lists, and emigration records.

Discover their journey to America from 1850-1920.

Join us for insights and research tips with Phyllis Ericson! Whether you're a beginner or an experienced researcher, this supportive group will share valuable research experiences.

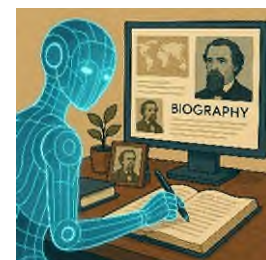
This is a Zoom-only session. Register now by clicking this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/jGrF8FXAQ5Siitq7nAfBnQ#/registration> .



July 23, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – “*From Records to Stories: Using AI in Genealogy Research,*” by Marcia Philbrick

This presentation by TGS member, Marcia Philbrick, will explore how artificial intelligence is being used in genealogy today to assist with transcription, research analysis, storytelling, and public history projects. While specific tools continue to evolve, the session focuses on practical uses, responsible evaluation, and skills genealogists can adapt as AI changes.



UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

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

Registration is now open. To see the conference flyer or to register, check the MOSGA website: <https://mosga.org/eventListings.php?nm=67>



Saturday, August 15, 2026 – Genealogy KC

A free, full-day genealogy event, hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Attend virtually, or in person. Registration is now open.

For details and registration: <https://genealogykc.org/genealogy-kc-2026-1>



Saturday, October 10, 2026 – Wichita Genealogical Society Annual Conference, with featured speaker **Megan Clark Young**. Registration is now open. Details and registration information are available at: <https://wichitagensoc.org/2026-Conference> .



Want to learn about more upcoming genealogical events? Check out the ConferenceKeeper website, at <https://conferencekeeper.org/> .



Genealogy is a life-long learning adventure and journey of discovery! There's always more to learn, and something new to find!

