



News & Views *Newsletter*

www.tgstopeka.org

2717 SE Indiana Ave. , Topeka, KS
(785) 233-5762

Volume 34 No. 7

July 2026

From the President's Desk – Take a Research Road Trip!

Summer is a great time to take a day trip to explore some of the genealogical and historical treasures in Kansas! In the past month, I visited two gems that I highly recommend for learning about local history or for researching your ancestors.

The Coffey County Historical Museum in Burlington, Kansas, houses artifacts related to the history of Coffey County and its residents. The varied displays are tastefully arranged in historically accurate vignettes, "rooms," or in large display cases in the 14,000-square-foot facility. A complete mammoth skeleton unearthed in Coffey County, huge arrowhead and doll collections, and the firearms displays are especially impressive. Additionally, the museum houses a comprehensive genealogy library, with a primary emphasis on Coffey County. Staff members Shirley Gorge and Erin Petterson are knowledgeable, full of enthusiasm, and ready to assist visitors. For more information, visit the museum website <https://coffeymuseum.org>



The Edward & Elizabeth Burns Historical Research Pavilion on the second floor of the Advanced Learning Library in Wichita is packed with an astounding array of genealogical resources. It is located near Century II at 711 West 2nd Street in downtown Wichita. I was amazed at the German, Quaker, Native American, Civil War, and many other collections contained in the beautiful, open space. The Wichita Genealogical Society's Annual Conference will be held in the library on October 10, 2026. Home 2 Suites by Hilton Wichita Downtown Delano Hotel is right across the street from the library and is reasonably priced if you would like convenient lodging near the library. It is also close to the Wichita Art Museum and several other museums. The Wichita/Sedgwick County Historical Museum is especially lovely! Learn more about the library and check out the catalog at <https://www.wichitalibrary.org/Research/LocalHistory>

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

Donations vs. Membership Fees

We have recently had questions from a few people who had made donations to TGS by direct transfers of RMD funds from their retirement accounts and then asked why we were still sending them notices that their membership renewal payments were due. They assumed that their donation would also be automatically applied to their memberships. That assumption is not correct, and here is why:



When a donation is made as a direct transfer to us from a retirement account RMD distribution, we record the full amount as a donation and the donor's taxable income for the year is reduced by the full amount of the donation. If part of that transfer is not actually a donation but is applied toward purchase of a membership of other product or service, then the amount of the donation (and associated reduction in taxable income) should be reduced to the remaining amount that is actually being donated. Purchases of membership are not tax-deductible, and do not apply credit toward reducing your taxable income. If we apply a portion of the "donation" toward membership, and still issue you a receipt for the full amount as a donation, we would not be in compliance with the law and accepted accounting standards. In addition, the direct transfers of funds coming to us from retirement account distributions typically have little or no documentation about the source or intended use of the funds – sometimes, we have difficulty in even determining who the money is from!

If you are sending us a donation as a direct RMD transfer from your retirement account and do want us to apply a portion of that to your annual membership renewal fees, please contact us and let us know so that we can make that adjustment when the funds are received. We will subtract the amount needed to cover your membership fees from the total amount received and credit it to your membership, but will also reduce the amount that we record as a donation, and issue your donation receipt for the reduced amount.

We're sorry that this is necessary, but we need to operate in compliance with the law and accepted accounting standards. We do thank you for your support of our organization, whether it comes in the form of continued membership support, monetary donations, or both.

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!

- Heidi Norcross – New Milford, CT
- Walter Murphy – Lawrence, 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):
 - **Finding Your Colonial British Ancestors**, by Phyllis Ericson
 - **Getting the Most from Your Cemetery Visits**, by Barb LaClair
 - **Probate: More than Just a Will**, by Barb LaClair
 - **Every Document Holds a Story**, by Barb LaClair
 - **The Dawes Rolls – Using and Understanding Them**, by Barb LaClair
- **Resources & Records** –
 - **Index to TGS Pedigree Charts**
 - ***Check below for an update on the Columbian Title Abstract records!***



There are now more than 80 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!

Columbian Title Abstract Records – An Update

The Columbian Title Abstract Company operated in Topeka from the 1920s through the 1980s. They produced detailed title abstracts, tracing all transactions and legal actions that might have bearing on ownership or heirship to a parcel of real estate, and then recording their findings in the form of a Title Abstract. When they ceased operation, approximately 800 oversized volumes of these records were donated to TGS. Entries in the books provide a wealth of information of interest to genealogists, including transcriptions of wills and probate, lists of names and locations of heirs, and references to mortgages and bankruptcies, marriages and divorces. The records are unique, and copies did not exist anywhere else. Since we acquired the books decades ago, TGS has been working on ways to ensure that the records are more widely accessible, by creating indexes and then seeking opportunities to have the books digitized and published online.



This has been a monumental project, and it has been ongoing for quite some time. Indexing by TGS volunteers was completed about a year ago, and many months have elapsed since we shipped off these 800+ volumes of oversized books to FamilySearch for digitization. Some of our readers may be wondering what has happened to this project, and when the indexes and images will become available online. Progress has been slow but steady, and we are beginning to see the fruits of our labors. FamilySearch has completed digitization of the books, and **most of the thousands of images of pages from the record books have been uploaded to FamilySearch and are now available on the FamilySearch.org website. Images may be browsed there, and are full-text searchable!** To find them, search images for the creator "Columbian Title Company." We have been setting up and testing a searchable database system for publishing the index on our website, and it is nearly ready to

launch. We are just waiting until the remaining digitized images have been uploaded to FamilySearch.org website (we're almost there!) so that we can tie the FamilySearch Image Group Numbers to entries in our index to make it easier to go directly from a record in the index to the image on FamilySearch.

We are really excited to finally be able to make these records more widely available, and happy to know that the risk of loss of these records has been substantially reduced. Records preservation and improved access is a core part of our mission, and we are proud of this accomplishment. We would like to extend a big **"THANK YOU"** to all of the TGS volunteers who have helped to make this happen, and to our partners at FamilySearch.

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/>

Bureau of Land Management Launches New Patent Search Website

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office has launched a completely new website interface for searching land patents (see it at <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/s/>). Patent records represent the first time that a parcel of land is conveyed from the government to private ownership, and are very useful when researching early settlers in a geographic area, or just tracing the early history of a region.

The new search interface is quite different than the previous one, and unfortunately, is slower and does not appear to offer as many options for filtering search results. The “Advanced Search” option seems to be closest to what was available on the previous system. Hopefully, staff at the BLM will recognize the limitations of their new system and take steps to improve it quickly.



UPCOMING TGS EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

There is always something happening at TGS. Check the events calendar on our website (<https://tqstopoka.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., via Zoom).
 - o **August 11, 2026** – Researching in an Unfamiliar Location
 - o **September 8, 2026** – Military Bounty Land
- **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** – Meeting has been cancelled
 - o **August 18, 2026** – In person at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library
- **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 **August 4, 2026** – Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA)

- **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 **August 21, 2026** – Add Interest – Create a Story Using the Five Senses

All times listed are Central Time zone.

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

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

Monday, September 7, 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.)

July 23, 2026, 5:00 p.m. - Please join us at 5:00 p.m. on July 23rd for our monthly fundraiser at **Jose Peppers, 1425 SW Wanamaker**, for some good food and lively conversation. If you cannot join us then, you have the option of dining anytime between 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. or ordering online or in person for carryout.

This month's fundraiser will work a little differently - a voucher (download at <https://tgstopeka.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Single-Voucher.jpeg>) must be presented at the time of purchase to have your purchase count toward our fundraiser event. TGS will receive 20% of total sales for our group.

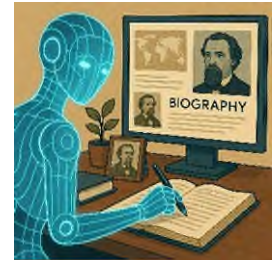
Following dinner, join us at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library at 7:00 p.m. for our monthly program.



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>).

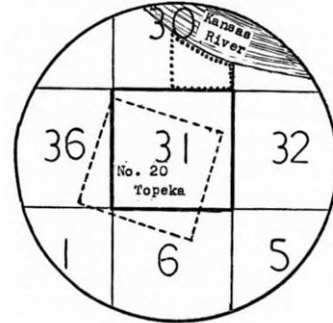
July 23, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – “From Records to Stories: Using AI in Genealogy Research,” by Marcia Philbrick

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.



August 27, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – The Native Origins of Shawnee County and Topeka, by Lisa LaRue Baker

Multi-media artist, Lisa LaRue Baker, will chronicle the fascinating Native origins and transfer of land ownership in the early days of our city and county. Join us and discover who owned your property in 1850!



SPECIAL PROGRAM OFFERINGS:

August 9, 2026, 2:00 p.m. – Vicars, Villages and Vows, by Phyllis Ericson

Led by Phyllis Ericson, this group welcomes both beginners and experienced researchers. Join us for this Zoom-only session as we cover how to research with Parish Registers. We will see:

- how baptism, marriage, and burial records provide us with dates, places, and relationships for our ancestors.
- the five best websites for researching your English & Welsh records, and Scottish and Irish church records as well.

Register now and get the details for joining by clicking this link: [Register Here](#) or paste this link into your

browser: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Y9FQ2JRBQ96P7wxhK4WcA>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email and link to join the meeting. The handout is available for download from the upcoming events listing on the TGS website.



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> . *Reminder – TGS members may register at member-discounted rates for the Wichita Genealogical Society Conference!*



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



Unless steps are taken to preserve the memories and stories of our family members, they can be forgotten in just three generations. Don't let your family stories be lost!

