



News & Views Newsletter

www.tgstopeka.org

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From the President's Desk – Signed, Sealed, and Delivered?

Do you collect signatures or samples of your ancestors' handwriting? I am always excited when I locate a handwritten letter or signature on a document in my family history research. It is a thrill for me to see or touch the same paper that one of my forebears wrote upon. I have samples of signatures from oaths of allegiance in the early 1700s up to the cancelled check my dad wrote when he purchased his first tractor.



A signature is one of the most intimate traces a person leaves behind. For genealogists, signatures offer a rare chance to see an ancestor's hand at work.

The slant of the letters, the neatness or flair in the strokes, the size of the letters, the language, and even a mark instead of a name can reveal clues about literacy, personality, and circumstance.

Signatures appear in more places than we might expect. Draft registrations, deeds, wills, marriage licenses, naturalization papers, military pension applications, and religious certificates often preserve them with remarkable clarity. Each document anchors a signature to a specific date, place, and purpose, helping us confirm identity when multiple people share the same name or when records conflict.

For many researchers, discovering an ancestor's handwriting or signature is a moment of connection and an encounter across time. It reminds us that our relatives were not just names in an index but individuals who stood at a desk and signed their place in history. Preserving these signatures, whether through digitization or careful archival storage, ensures that future generations can continue to connect to our ancestors through their handwritten autographs!

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

Leadership Changes at TGS

Our 2026 elections of Board members have concluded – thanks to all who voted. Those who were elected to new terms that will begin January 1 are: Chad Sidesinger, Vice President; Spencer Smith, Treasurer; and Eadie Flickinger, Corresponding Secretary. Congratulations, and many thanks to Danni Altman-Newell (current Vice President) and Nancy Brock (current Corresponding Secretary), who will be retiring from our Board at the end of this year.

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!

- Abigail Peoples - 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):
 - o **Native Origins of Shawnee County**, by Lisa LaRue-Baker
- **Resources & Records** –
 - o None this month, but more are in the works!



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!

October is Family History Month!

October is national Family History Month, and it is a great time to celebrate! What could you do? Maybe it's time to finally put your research on pause for a little bit while you compile what you have learned into short stories, photo **albums**, books or other forms of summaries that you could share with your non-genealogist family members. Maybe it's

a good time to plan an informal family reunion, bringing relatives together to share photos, memories and stories. Or, maybe it's time to tackle organizing and cleaning up your research – take advantage of available software and applications to find and correct errors in your compiled family trees (Ancestry.com, MyHeritage, and FamilyTreeMaker all have them), make sure your sources are cited, gather your photos up and make sure they are all **labeled** or tagged with appropriate metadata, etc.

There's always something more to do, and never enough time. But, you have to start somewhere. Bite off the work in small projects, and soon they will add up to big accomplishments that you can be proud to share with others!



Are You Researching Shawnee County Ancestors? We're Here to Help!

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 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday 9 a.m. to noon and 6:30 p.m. 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/>

Family History is Good for your Health!

What is it about Family History that makes it one of the most popular hobbies among American adults today? Why do we genealogists and family historians spend so much time (and also money!) in our efforts to learn about our ancestors and preserve their stories? Is it just something fun to do, or are there deeper and more important reasons?

Many of us may have theories or have heard comments from experts about possible health benefits that come from knowing about our family's history, but research and scientific evidence to support these theories have been scarce. Nevertheless, many of us know "in our gut" and feel strongly that family history matters.

In May of 2025, the National Genealogical Society, FamilySearch, and Vivid-Pix collaborated to co-sponsor a **Symposium on Healthy Aging and the Role of Family History**. During this day-long event, national experts from a variety of disciplines talk about their experiences with healthy aging and factors that can contribute to healthy aging and extended lifespans. Not only does the process of



researching family history help to keep the mind active and sharp, and strengthen one's sense of connectedness, but it also builds resilience. Dr. Charlotte Yeh, a symposium panelist, outlines her thoughts about the key factors that contribute to healthy aging as: Purpose (a reason to get up in the morning), People (connections), and Possibilities (a positive view of aging).

If you are intrigued by the theory that family history may actually contribute to measurable improvements in healthy aging, the entire symposium has been recorded, and is available for viewing at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPuFl1BJlibMhVenEuWQB-6C1XC_nDtDa

Plan Now for Holiday Family Gatherings

Even though the outdoor temperatures still feel like summer, the winter holiday season is really not far away. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Chalice, or whatever your family celebrates - all are occasions which often bring family and friends together. They also offer many opportunities for genealogists and family historians. Now is a good time to think about and prepare for the possibilities. Here are a few ideas:



- Think about who will be there, and opportunities to ask family history questions and interview them. Make your list of questions, and brush up on your interviewing and recording skills.
- Gather scrapbooks and photos to share and discuss – they will often evoke memories and stories.
- Write up brief biographical sketches to share what you have learned about some of your ancestors.
- Ask everyone to bring a copy of their favorite family recipes, and compile them into a family cookbook.
- Make up a “memory jar” filled with strips of paper containing questions to be asked, and pass it around among those in attendance to inspire them to share memories and stories. Have each person draw out a question and share their answer with the group.

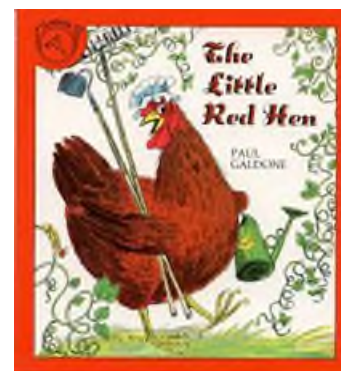
No matter how you celebrate, we hope that you will cherish and enjoy spending time with your family. We never know when today's opportunities may be our last.

Coming Soon – “*The Genealogist is In!*”

We are excited to announce a new collaborative effort between TGS and the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library. Beginning in October, Cindy Cruz and Barb LaClair will be available on the 2nd Tuesday morning each month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. to provide 30-minute consultations by appointment. We will provide research guidance and answer basic and introductory genealogy questions (these sessions are not for advanced or brick wall questions). We're still working out how appointments will be scheduled. Watch for details coming soon! If the initial trial period for the program goes well and generates lots of interest, we will consider expanding to additional times.

If Not You, Then Who?

Some of our readers might remember the story of the Little Red Hen. The hen repeatedly asked her friends for help as she planted, harvested and ground the wheat and then baked it into bread. None of her “friends” stepped up to offer help until it was time to eat the bread. What does this have to do with the Topeka Genealogical Society? Like the Little Red Hen, we need some help from our friends.



TGS is an all-volunteer organization. We don't have any employees or hired staff. That means that for every job or task that gets done, large or small, someone has to step up and volunteer to do it. Have you ever stopped to think about who trims the grass around our building, takes out the trash, sweeps the floors, cleans the sinks, creates or arranges for our many educational programs, helps with our indexing or records preservation projects, manages our databases, or any of the hundreds of other jobs that have to be done to keep us running? If you have been volunteering, and can answer “I do” to one or more of these questions, we would like to say “THANK YOU!” We appreciate everything that you have done for TGS.

If, on the other hand, you have not volunteered with us, we invite (and maybe we'll beg) you to consider doing so. We always have jobs for which we need help. Some are short-term, lasting only so long as we have our building or until a task is completed. Others are **ongoing** but require only a few hours each month. Most can be completed on flexible schedules. Some of our current needs are listed below. If you think that you might be able to help, please email us at tgstopoka.president@gmail.com. We thank you.

Volunteers are currently needed to help with:

- Compiling and editing the monthly News & Views newsletter.
- Light groundskeeping – trim weeds and grass around parking areas, pick up litter.
- Interior light housekeeping – vacuum carpeted areas, mop tile floor in hallway and bathrooms, clean sinks and toilets, dusting as needed, empty wastebaskets.
- Handyman – replace bulbs in light fixtures, minor building repairs & upkeep, change furnace filters, etc.
- Plumbing – fix leaky faucets, toilet that does not flush properly, etc.
- Digitizing paper files (administrative records, filed in office. Work on site at TGS)
- Research assistance – conduct research for client requests – many will require onsite record retrieval or research at the Kansas State Historical Society Archives. Need to be experienced researcher, familiar with local records, and well-organized.
- Class or Special Interest Group leaders – share your special area of expertise with others.
- Audiovisual tech support – assist with AV equipment setup for monthly programs, and editing recorded programs to prepare them for upload to our website.
- Publications manager – oversee updating and converting TGS publications to e-pubs, manage publication sales

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, 7:00 p.m., via Zoom).
 - o **September 8, 2026** – Military Bounty Land
 - o **October 13, 2026** – Finding the Parents
 - o **November 10, 2026** – Historical Laws
 - o **December 2026 – NO MEETING IN DECEMBER**
- **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 **October 20, 2026** – In person - guided research 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 **October 6, 2026 – Using Gedmatch**
- **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 **October 16, 2026** – “Tell” the Story: Write a story using 1st or 2nd person
 - o **November 20, 2026** – Holidays: Write Your Story, or an Ancestor’s Story

All times listed are Central Time zone.

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

Monday, October 5, 9:30-11:00 a.m.
Monday, November 2, 9:30-11:00 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.)

September 24, 2026, 5:00 p.m. - Please join us at 5:00 p.m. for our monthly fundraiser at Panera, 1421 SW Wanamaker, for some good food and lively conversation. If you cannot join us then, you have the option of dining anytime between 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. or ordering online or in person for carryout. Mention this fundraiser or show them the flyer at the checkout register for TGS to receive 20% of sales benefit. For online orders, use the code FUND4U.

Following dinner, join us at TSCPL 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>).

September 24, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – “Civil War Medicine: Medical Treatments of the Mid-Nineteenth Century” by Sarah Bader-King

Sarah Bader-King, Executive Director of the Wornall/Majors House Museum in Kansas City, will discuss medicine during the Civil War and show some of the different types of medical equipment that surgeons used during the era.



October 22, 2026, 7:00 p.m. – Finding and Preserving Your Family's Historical Artifacts, by Chad Sidesinger

Chad Sidesinger, a third-generation family historian and longtime Topeka Genealogical Society Member, will present an enlightening program on Finding and Preserving Your Family's Historical Artifacts. He will talk about using both simple and more advanced ways to find artifacts that relate directly to your family. He will demonstrate how to set up search terms on popular websites to automatically have hints get directly emailed to you! Several examples will also be shown of what can be found.



NOTE: No monthly programs in November or December.

SPECIAL PROGRAM OFFERINGS:

CANCELLED: October 22, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – Nordic Interest Group: Using Artificial Intelligence for Genealogy, by Phyllis Ericson

UPCOMING REGIONAL EVENTS

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 other upcoming genealogical events? Check out the ConferenceKeeper website, at <https://conferencekeeper.org/> .



"If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday." - Pearl S. Buck

